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CHRISTIANITY

IN THE

DAILY CONDUCT OF LIFE.

STUDIES OF TEXTS RELATING TO PRINCIPLES OF THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER.

BY

JAMES MULCHAHEY, S.T.D.

SECOND EDITION.

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"*The kingdom of Heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.*"—ST. MATTHEW xiii. 33.

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PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

THE writer of this book sent forth the first edition without his name, not from excess of modesty or, much less, an unwillingness to bear any degree of responsibility that properly attaches to one who asks his fellow-men to consider any thought of his on either the authority or practical bearings of the Christian Religion. It was simply from a wish to divest the subject as far as possible of other personal associations, and make the book for the reader, what its title implies, "Studies" of the Master's teachings concerning principles which are fundamental in the Christian character.

Can there be any question of the urgent need of such study in our modern Christendom? Will any one maintain that the ideal of character, which Christ in his own person exemplified and to the inculcation of which his personal ministry was directed, is that which is in general acceptation or

even that which is clearly aimed at by the most devout in the current Christianity of our time?

The generally accepted statement of Christ's purpose in His personal ministry is, that it was to introduce and teach the "Gospel of Salvation." But, salvation from what? and, to what?

Scarcely less important is the question, By what? By ceremonial observances, or even by sacramental ordinances? Certainly He assigned a very important place to these in the Christian economy; but as certainly the most punctilious conformity to them may result in a religion of sheer formalism, having as little purifying or rectifying effect as the religion of the scribes and Pharisees which He so repeatedly and emphatically condemned. Is it, then, by the process which is known in our modern Christendom as that of "a Christian experience," in which the stages can be distinctly marked, from the gloom of a first "conviction of sin" to the radiant light of "conversion" and full "joy and peace in believing"? Let the preciousness of such an experience be conceded; yet still, it must be admitted that one will search in vain in our Lord's teachings for a description or inculcation of this process; and it is evident enough that it may result in a religion quite as technical as that of the Pharisees, and as devoid of any power that makes for righteousness, or that can

touch character beyond the mere emotional sentiments that play on its surface.

With this kind of religion as the current representative of Christianity, it need not be wondered at, however it may be regretted, if a depreciative estimation of Christianity is found to be plainly and increasingly apparent in modern thought and feeling. Some attribute this to a decadence of faith, which is supposed to be an inevitable consequence of the greatly enhanced interest in physical science which has been enkindled by our rapid progress in the discovery and application of material forces. But we doubt the sufficiency, or even the truth, of this explanation.

Admitting all that may be adduced in evidence of the determined hostility of materialistic scepticism to the Christian faith, we see no reason to conclude that either this kind of scepticism, or its special antagonism to faith has, as yet, any stronghold in the general mind, or is very likely to be positively influential except in the minds of the comparatively few with whose intellectual temperament it is particularly congenial. Moreover, whatever may be true of the materialistic tendencies of the age, it is indisputable that an intense yearning for spiritual faith is an increasingly marked characteristic of it. Never before were so many looking about for the verifiable

grounds of such faith with earnest longing to find therein a foothold for themselves; never before was an awakened interest in the study of the Bible, and especially in all that relates to the person and character of Jesus, so generally felt; never before was the Christian Faith so buttressed with evidences on every side.

If then there are apparent reasons for an apprehension that faith in Christianity is on the decline, is not the truth, rather, that the decline is in the *appreciation* of Christianity, because that which stands for it in the popular estimation seems to be lacking in any real, regenerative virtue? Men are asking with new interest, What is your Christianity good for? What is it doing for us? What is its productive worth? And if they see that it is devoid of real moral power, that it does not make men, in any true sense, better, more trustworthy for honesty, purity, truth, or any other virtue, in every-day life, it is not very surprising if, in an age which is emphatically practical, they should find it difficult to retain confidence in the assurance that its "profession" will guarantee "salvation" in a life that is to be hereafter.

Now there can be no question that Christianity came into the world as the Gospel of salvation; as little that the promise of eternal life which its first

preachers held out to all those that believe was one of the most potent influences by which, in the Apostolic age, it drew all men unto Christ. But even in that age, peculiarly ripe as it was for a new Faith, the claim that Jesus had brought life and immortality to light would have enlisted only a fanatical following if the revelation had not at the same time brought the life of men even here out of darkness into marvellous light, if it had not come to men in demonstration of the Spirit and of power with the effective energy of a new creation, "created after God in righteousness and true holiness," thus proving not only its divine origin, but also its beneficent ability, divinely characteristic, to lift the world out of the degradation of its alienated state, to restore the fallen children of Adam to their true relation as sons of God, and actually work in them with all the regenerative virtue of life from above to make them, in very deed, meet for the inheritance of saints in light. The real secret of the power of primitive Christianity to convert the world was in the fact that it brought religion—not ceremonialism, nor sentimentalism, nor a faithless moralism—but *religion*, the recognition of man's true relation to God, and under it to all his fellow creatures, into the daily life and conduct of the world. Our Lord's personal teachings were directed to this purpose more than

any other, to impress men with a sense of the present existence and rule of the Kingdom of God, to make them feel that life is in it here and now, and to realize that its righteous government extends over the whole of life, into its entire conduct, and throughout all its relations. The Epistles of the New Testament show very clearly that the Apostolic teaching fully maintained in this respect the standard of the Master. Not even in St. Paul's special insistence on the fundamental importance of faith, was it, in the least degree, lowered. If any modern Christian has fallen into the habit of thinking so, let him read over carefully the closing Chapters—beginning with the twelfth—of the Epistle to the Romans, and let him remember that the definition of Christianity, the statement of its nature and purpose, which St. Paul himself gave, was nothing less than this: "The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men; teaching ["instructing, disciplining, training"] us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

For this purpose and to this end Christianity went forth conquering and to conquer in the first centuries; and its capability for just this effect—regenerating, enlightening, purifying, ennobling a fallen race—has ever been its truest test. It is its truest test to-day. Men may find plausible reasons for scepticism in the seemingly antagonising developments of science, the unsettling disclosures of historical criticism, or the disturbing theories of philosophical speculation, but they can find no pretext or excuse for it in the incontrovertible fact that a peasant of Galilee, near two thousand years ago, revealed to mankind in His own Person an entirely new type of character, and laid the foundation of a society in which the principles of His life were to be conserved, developed, and applied: so that, as Mr. Gladstone has finely said, "Down to this day there is not a moral question, nor is there a question of duty arising in the course of life for any of us, that is not determinable in all its essentials by applying to it as a touchstone the principles declared in the Gospel." The concurrent verdict of twenty centuries has ratified the conclusion of believers in the first age, that He whose ethical wisdom was so widely inclusive and far reaching could have been none other than God Incarnate; and no one may presume now to dissent from it without being constrained to admit,

at least, that His claim is absolutely indisputable to be, in unparalleled pre-eminence, the Prince of teachers in the domain of morality and religion.

But again we ask, Is there not in our time an urgent need of recalling men, and not least those who profess to be His disciples, to the study of His teachings? Is there not need of an effort to divest the apprehension of them from the unreal, technical, professional sense which is commonly put upon them in our modern Christianity, and get at their true meaning and real application, in honest accordance with the Master's intention?

This is the attempt of the writer in the following pages. He has reason, from the reception which has been given to the first edition of the book, to hope that it has not been entirely unsuccessful. But no one can be more conscious than himself of his inadequate treatment of the subject; and he can say in all sincerity that there will be to him a sufficient satisfaction, if, even though by his shortcoming, some one fully competent shall be stimulated to take it up, and so bring out the whole truth, in demonstration of the spirit and of power, as to awaken the Church of our day and generation to a lively sense of its sorest and most pressing need—that of a thoroughly honest Ethical Revival. JAS. MULCHAHEY.

ST. PAUL'S CHAPEL, TRINITY PARISH, N. Y.,
Feb. 4, 1889.

CORRIGENDA.

In Table of Contents, Chapter X.— for "Profession" read Possession.

Page 8, line 10, end—for "." read :

" 53, " 5—for "(v. 3):" read viz.

" 67, " 8—for "faith" read fault.

" 85, " 2—for "leper" read lesser.

" 111, " 20—for "perplexities" read the realities.

" 131, Title—for "Profession" read Possession.

" 152, line 17—for "strangely" read strongly.

" 154, " 4—for "Yea," read Yet.

" 194, " 19—for "possessions" read professions.

" 271, " 16—for "worldliness" read worldlings.

" 320, " 22—for "lips" read eyes.

CHAPTER I.

THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLE.

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind."—St. Matt. xxii. 37.

IN thinking upon what may be due from us towards Almighty God we are apt to be confused by an apprehension of His infinite superiority to us, as if it were the same as His being at an infinite distance from us ; and the consequence is that our conceptions of the relation which we sustain to Him, and the obligations we are under in that relation, become fanciful and unreal.

It may prevent this misapprehension, if, in considering the precept of Christ which puts before us the love of God as the first and chiefest duty in life, we begin by looking at the obligation and effect of the same principle in one of the most real and unquestionable relationships of this world. God hath set " the solitary in families " ; and no obligations are more universally seen and felt to be pressing and perpetual than those which are involved in the relations of the family. Now, none of us have any difficulty in understanding and accepting the proposition that love in the family relations is

the first and chiefest duty: and, if we were asked to give the reason, we might be ready to reply, as we should be right in replying, that the obligation to love our husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters, is an obligation which is involved in the very nature of these relationships, and of such vital character as to be the foundation of every other duty. Our obligations in life are all dependent on our relations and determined by them. We owe to this or that person or thing certain duties because we sustain a certain kind and degree of relationship toward him or it. There is not the meanest thing that grows or exists which may not be, or may not be put, in a relation that will involve some kind of obligation on our part towards it.

In the constitution of human life these relationships with their corresponding obligations are, for the most part, clearly defined. First, the general comprehensive relationship which we sustain toward all men, as fellow beings of the same race, involves the obligation of sympathy and opportune mutual helpfulness; then, our relationship with a nearer portion of this race, as inhabitants of one particular country, involves the obligations of loyal citizenship towards the established government of that country; then, in the smaller circle which comprises the

community wherein is the sphere of our individual lives, there are many relationships, some permanent and some only transitory and occasional, to every one of which there is its own unquestionable obligation. Among these, the relations of the family are universally recognized as holding, and being entitled to hold the first and chiefest place. As universally, the first obligation in the family relations is conceded to be that of kindred love. This is the essential, fundamental, indispensable, obligation of the family. It is the root and head of all its mutual obligations. Just in proportion as it is truly felt and exercised is every other relative duty sure to be rightly performed. It is not possible that the life of the family can be true, or that its complex web of mutual duty can be held together with the least beauty or symmetry, unless constantly pervaded and directed by love. We may go further, and say that not one family duty, of the multifarious obligations which are involved in its common life, can be rightly or acceptably discharged with an acknowledged absence of love. Let the husband or wife claim to be ever so punctilious in avoiding marital indecencies; let the children be ever so decorously obedient, and the brothers and sisters ever so mutually polite: yet, let it be acknowledged that all

this propriety of deportment is absolutely devoid of the impulses of true family affection, and every one will say that the life of such a family is thoroughly and radically false.

Now let us carry up this recognition of relative obligation to Him who is the Father, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named. Let us remember that while He is the Lord God Almighty—"the high and lofty One who inhabiteth eternity and dwelleth in the high and holy place," He is yet revealed to us as, in the truest possible sense, our Father; and our relation to Him is that of children, so closely and vitally that "in Him we live, move, and have our being."

Can there be any question, then, of our obligation, and that in the very highest possible degree, to love Him? The only point of doubt might be, whether He would care for or accept our love; and this is conclusively answered by the explicit assurances of His own revealed word. Even if it were not, even if our loving devotion could receive no assuring response, the knowledge of our filial relationship in such wise towards Him would, in itself, be sufficient not only to warrant the exercise within us of the affection of loving children to Him, but also to render our obligation in that respect most unquestionable and

imperative. If filial love is the first duty of a child to a parent, and if without this there can be no truth of character and no acceptable discharge of other relative duties on the part of a child, then, from every one of us, towards Him who is our Maker and Preserver, in the highest possible sense our Father, the duty, which is before and above all others, and at the same time the most imperatively obligatory and indispensable of all others, is that of love. Obviously, this must be the first, animating, and dominating principle of all our conduct. Without it, no duty can be acceptable or counted righteous before God: with it, and just in proportion as it is true and rightly exercised, will every duty in all the relations of life be true and right.

Moreover, it is clear in reason as well as in religion that our love to God should be supreme, above all our other affections, and dominating them all: because God Himself is supreme; the universal Parent and Benefactor; "the Father, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named." All other relationships are but partial; those with which we are knit together in the closest affinities of the earthly family are but fragmentary; while there is no break, no difference or inequality, in the universal brotherhood which binds us all together and

holds us under the perpetual obligation of loving devotion, as dear children, to Him. Therefore, nothing less than supreme love, love above all and comprehensive of all: love which consecrates to His service all our faculties, and gives tone and direction to the whole conduct of our life; love which puts our relation to Him above all other relations, nor only that, but as their originating source and therefore as the determining principle of every obligation that we can possibly have and discharge in them. Nothing, we say, less or lower than this can be adequate as the measure or degree of the love which is due from us to our Father in heaven.

How true it is, then, that the command: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind"—that is, with the homage of the entire self and nature—is the first of all commandments, and how clear that it should be accounted the whole of the Law! We could not hold ourselves for a moment excusable in not submitting our hearts and lives to this Law, even if we had no further revelation of God than the single fact of His universal Fatherhood. How much more imperative our obligation, and what unspeakably winning tenderness in its tones of authority when it comes to us from the lips of Him

who, having been from all eternity the only begotten Son of the Almighty Father, had condescended to be made our Elder Brother that our sonship might be truly affiliated with His! As given by Him, this command comprises not only the whole of the Law, but the whole of Religion also; and all the sanctions of religion are to be recognised as combining, with those of natural duty, in calling upon us for an entire submission of ourselves, with all our faculties, in loving obedience to the Lord our God: the Father Almighty, and the Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

How this love, or our possession and exercise of it, is to be determined by practicable measure and directed in practical application, are questions of the utmost importance for our consideration. First and foremost is the recognition of our obligation to love God supremely.

If it be admitted, we are prepared to see the utter worthlessness of mere morality as a substitute for religion. Morality is simply external propriety; decent and becoming, certainly, as it moves in the circles of social life, but not true even there if it be undirected by true motives. How can such mere external propriety be righteous before God? How can it possibly be acceptable unto Him who dis-

cerneth the very thoughts and intents of the heart? If no punctilious decency of marital behaviour without love could, or should, satisfy the heart of a loving husband or wife, no obedience of mere deportment be satisfactory to a loving father or mother, how can we suppose that He in whom we all live, move, and have our being, will accept from us anything less than the supreme, loving homage of our entire hearts and lives? What can the life in its mere form be without the heart? Why, then, should it be thought unreasonable that morality cannot be acceptable, cannot be counted as other than worthless in His sight, unless it be rooted and grounded in religion,—that is, in the loving homage which rightly belongs to the filial relation that binds us to Him?

One thing more, we trust, is made clear: viz., that true religion is consistent with our duty in every relation of life, and is the only efficient source of truth of character. A religious person is simply one whose life is regulated by the principle of loving obedience to God; and this loving obedience is grounded simply in a true recognition of his relation to God. He sees and acknowledges this relation as in its true place—above all other relations—and therefore feels his obligation to it as

the first and most imperative of all. The same truth of perception and of conscience which he exercised in relation to it keeps him also in the right attitude in relation to all the lower obligations of life. He renders to all their dues: love to whom love is due; honour, to whom honour; fear, to whom fear; custom, to whom custom: and just in proportion as he loves God supremely does he cherish true affections, and bear himself with right conduct,—with loving fidelity to his family, with loyalty to his nation, with honesty and sobriety, unswerving integrity and righteousness,—in all his dealings with his fellow men. This is the essence of religion. For the sake of this, to keep its principle alive in our hearts, we perform all those duties in the ordinances of the Church which are known as more technically religious. They are in no sense a substitute for it: they are absolutely hollow and hypocritical without it: they subserve their purpose only as they develop in our characters an ever truer and stronger exercise of it. We are baptized that we may be members of the Body of Christ, and so quickened by His Spirit; we render prayer and praise as our homage of loving devotion; we devoutly read Holy Scripture, and thankfully receive the ministrations of the Church, to quicken

and warm our spiritual sense,—that is, our sense of relation to God and the heavenly Word; and we come to the Sacrament of the Altar, that therein we may commemorate the infinite love of God in giving His only Son to die for us, and that we may feed on the heavenly food whereby our life is assimilated more and more with His, and we ourselves become more and more like Him and really identified with Him. So the Church in all its sacramental ordinances constantly reiterates the command which Christ Himself declared to be the first and chiefest of all: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." So it never fails to connect with this the second, which is like unto it: Thou shalt also love "thy neighbour as thyself:" the first duty in every relation is that of love. Let this be true: true in recognising the highest relation as the first of all, and true in its measure and degree toward all others. All the duties of life will spring out in their proper places and proportions, and our entire character will have its full-rounded symmetry as that of the righteous—just before God in this world, and, through His grace in Christ Jesus, becoming more and more meet for the inheritance of saints in light.

CHAPTER II.

THE PURPORT AND SCOPE OF THE FIRST GREAT COMMANDMENT.

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind."—ST. MATT. xxii. 37.

IF the consideration which we have already given to this precept of our Lord has been sufficient to inspire within us a conviction of our imperative obligation to love God supremely, then the question, How is such love to be measured and practically tested? must be felt by all to be one of the utmost practical moment. There is need of our taking this question into thoughtful consideration, because the misunderstanding of it involves many in uncertainty and perplexity.

Taking the phraseology of the command—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God *with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind*,"—it would seem to leave no room for the exercise or existence of any other affection. There is, clearly, no faculty of our spiritual nature which is not here required to be enlisted, nor is there recognised as allowable the least reserve of affection in any of our loving faculties; so that the requirement would seem in its terms to be the same thing as saying that we

must love nothing else but God : but this construction is evidently absurd, and plainly inconsistent with the obligations which devolve upon us in all the relationships of life.

Does the command, then, mean that we are to love God *more than* anything else? Many would reply at once : " Certainly, this is its meaning. We may have other loves in proper degree and legitimate application ; but we are not to put any other person or thing in competition with the love which is due to God." This sounds entirely orthodox ; but it is to be feared that like many other orthodox phrases it is often accepted and used with no adequate thought of its true sense.

We ask any one who has taken this as the meaning of the command, if he has ever ascertained, by any process of self-examination, whether he does in truth love God more than anything else. What person or thing can one put into that comparison with any propriety or for any satisfactory test? Those to whom we owe the highest degree of affection in our earthly relations would be the most obviously suitable. Take, then, the love of a husband for the wife ; or of a wife for the husband : can any one say, honestly and intelligently, that he does love God more than the one or the other of

these? Can a father and mother honestly say that they love God more than they love their child? We dare say that if one is honest with himself he will find it impossible to put his love to God, if it be true, and his kindred love in either of these or other earthly relations, into a scale of comparison, and then determine, that in mere degree the one outweighs the other. The same assertion might be made if we should go very much lower down, and take for the comparison our love of any of the things of this life which we esteem as good. Let it be health, or wealth, or any other thing which is desirable, and in its place rightly prized: if we consider honestly the degree of our esteem and so of our love of it, we shall hardly venture to claim that we are conscious of loving God more in any intelligible sense than we love it. The truth is, that any such comparison must be unsatisfactory, because it puts in comparison two things which have no common scale of measurement. Every legitimate human affection is determined solely by its own relation, and is properly dominant, we might even say supreme, in that relation. A true husband and wife may love each other with the fulness of connubial affection, and they may love their children with equal fulness of affection: you cannot put the

two affections into a scale of comparison so as to determine whether or no one in mere degree exceeds the other. You cannot ask a loving wife who is also a loving mother, to say whether she loves her husband or her child one more than the other, because she does, or ought to, love each in its own proper relation with the full affection of her heart.

For the same reason, no one can take the love which he has, or ought to have, towards Almighty God, and put that love into a scale of comparison with his legitimate affection for any earthly person or thing, so as to determine in his consciousness that the one exceeds in degree the other. The truth is, it should not be a question of degree at all. The difference is not in degree, but in kind. The fundamental question is simply as to the nature and proper place of relations, with a clear recognition of the universal rule, that the claims of a higher relation are always superior to those of any lower; therefore, that the claims of that which is highest of all must be dominant over all.

This is the key to the true meaning and practical application of the command: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." It means that we are to recognise our Father in heaven as supreme, and

our relation to Him as far above all other relations. Corresponding to it, then, must our loving homage and obedience be—first and chiefest of all. Nor only that, but, as our relation to Him is the head and vital source of all our other relations, so our love to Him must be the foundation principle of all our other affections. We are to love everything else as in Him; nor can we have any legitimate or allowable love for any person or thing which is irreconcilable with our love to Him.

Here it may be asked (and if one is in earnest he will be likely to ask with no slight degree of interest), does it follow that we are always to *be conscious* of exercising such love to God—love supreme over all, and dominating all? When we are consciously exercising love in our earthly relations, are we to be at the same time conscious of loving God, and in our consciousness is our love to Him to be felt to be the dominating source of our love for them? To which we have no hesitation in answering, No. It is, indeed, quite possible that at times the thought of our relation to God and of His Fatherly love to us may come in to give its sanctifying tone to our feelings in the loving contemplation of any earthly object; but, for the most part, our affections in their active exercise are absorbing, and we rest consciously,

for the time being, only in the proper object of the particular affection.

In the relationships of this life, husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters, whose affections are true, may be truly said always to love one another; and yet it would be very far from the truth to say that they are always conscious of exercising such love. There is a passive influence of principle as well as that which is active in the consciousness; and this passive power may be constantly permeating our entire character, swaying our motives, directing our thoughts, and determining our desires, though we seldom give it our directly fixed attention. "There are under-currents in the ocean which act independently of the movements of the waters on the surface; far down too in its hidden depths there is a region where, even though the storm be raging on the upper waves, perpetual calmness and stillness reign. So there may be an under-current beneath the surface movements of life," and the entire character and conduct may be determined by principles whose power pervades the very depths of being, but whose influence, being exerted there, is not perceived or consciously felt among the stirring forces of common life. But, observe, this influence is none the less, nay, it is even more,

pervasive and dominant. See how in a family whose life meets the true family ideal, the entire intercourse of the brothers and sisters with each other is directed by mutual fraternal affection ; but there is a deeper spring in which all fraternal love must have its source. Brothers and sisters have a special love for each other because they are brothers and sisters—that is, children of common parents. The parental relation is above the fraternal ; and, therefore, the fraternal affection is true only as it has its source and vitality in love for the father and the mother. Filial love, then, dominates fraternal affection, even though there is no consciousness of this love in the active exhibition of such affection. There is no possible conflict or incompatibility between the two, because each is determined solely by its own relation. We love our parents as parents ; and we love our brothers because they are brothers—that is, children of the same parents with us. The fraternal love is in no degree inconsistent with the filial love : on the contrary, it is an outgrowth of it, and so an evidence that our hearts are really pervaded by it. As such only can it be true. No one can be said truly to love his parents—whatever signs of affection he may show directly to them—if he hates his brothers and sisters ; nor

can any one truly love these, that is, love them as brothers and sisters, if he does not love his parents.

We are now able to see how entirely practicable, as well as reasonable, the requirement is, that we shall love the Lord our God with all our heart, and soul, and mind: for it requires us only to recognise our relation to God as the highest of all relations, and to have the affection which properly belongs to it as such. It implies, of course, that God has graciously revealed Himself as our God and Father, and the Author of every good and perfect gift that we have or can have in life. It comes to us in the Christian revelation with an infinitely enhanced force, by the unspeakably gracious manifestations and proofs of the divine love and compassion for us which are afforded in the condescension and sacrifice of His only-begotten Son. So there is no lack of sufficient motives to win our hearts in uplifting their most grateful and admiring affections toward Him; and the spirit of His grace is ever ready to inspire these affections and quicken them in the fervour of loving devotion. It remains then only for us to be true; to put our highest affection where it rightly belongs, and to subordinate all others to it, each in its own proper place and degree. This is, surely,

most reasonable and right, as it is clearly the only rule for a full rounded symmetry of character.

It is as clearly indispensable in truth and integrity of life. It is impossible that any human life can be true which is not regulated by this principle. Even in the lower relations a violation or neglect of one obligation vitiates the entire character. No man can be a true father who is an unfaithful husband or a true brother who is false in his feelings and conduct as a son. Let one be ever so honest in his business transactions and courteous in his social intercourse, yet, if he be at the same time either a traitor to his country, or a tyrant or rake in his family, one could not with any propriety pronounce his character or life worthy of emulation or esteem. How much more emphatically is it true, that no amount of fidelity in discharging our lower obligations can be sufficient, if, at the same time, we be indifferent to that relation which is the highest of all, and neglectful of its obligations ?—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God." This is the *first* and *greatest* commandment. This stands at the head of all ; and obedience to this must be recognised as the first and most imperative of all. Neglect of it must, necessarily and inevitably, vitiate the entire character, and radically impair the whole life ;

while, on the other hand, the more truly and completely our life is regulated by it, the more nearly does character reach perfection, and the more surely does life fulfil its true purpose and attain its true end.

We have already made an inferential note of the worthlessness of mere morality as a substitute for religion. Our further consideration of the subject has been to but little purpose if it has not led us to see that religion, as distinguished from simple morality, *is a true requirement of our nature and being.* Some kind of affection, as determined in each case by the special relation, must be at the root of all genuine conduct. It is this which gives *character* to our conduct as human beings, which makes our actions praiseworthy or blameworthy and not the irresponsible movements of mere machines. Take this inspiration out of our human life, and we become mere living skeletons, and all our movements on the stage of existence, however decorous in outward seeming, are but those of corpses, dead forms, bodies without souls. How terrible must be the loss, how fatal the defect, if the deepest inspiration, that which comes from the highest relation and includes within it the principles of all the rest, be absolutely wanting! How is such

a life emptied of that which can alone give it true character or fill it with true enjoyment! How stunted its growth; how dry and hard its very best performances of duty and its highest reachings after happiness! On the other hand, how full rounded is his character, how genuine his life, how spontaneous his response to every call of duty, how quickened and warmed with all joyous inspirations, in whom the love of God has its rightful place as the affection of his highest relation, and who holds all others in their true subordinate relations to it! Duty in any relation is to him no hard constraint, but it is everywhere the spontaneous outgrowth and product of his vital impulses.

This suggests, as matter for serious reflection, how radically defective any religion must be which is rooted in lower motives than the love of God. There is much that passes for religion, which begins and ends only in regard for self, which has no higher conception of duty than to do that which is necessary to secure the salvation of self: this selfish motive being its loftiest inspiration, this selfish end its noblest aim. There need be no undue depreciation of self-regard, or, in its proper place, of desire for self-preservation and advancement. This motive has its place, in which it is legitimately one of the most

spurring motives of action in life: but *it is not religion:* it is simple selfishness. It may be legitimate: selfishness in a good sense; and as such it may stimulate our grateful appreciation of the mercy of God in Christ Jesus, and spur us on to earnest activity in working out our salvation: but it is selfishness still; and, if it be our only motive, or our highest motive, for serving God, if it be put in the place of that love to Him which springs from a true religious sense of His relation to us as our God and Father, then it is selfishness in the worst possible sense and application. Its effect will be, not to develop in us a true character, but to work in us the subtlety of self-satisfaction with a mock humility, and a constant proclivity to intrigue, deceit, and dishonesty, in all our intercourse.

There is need of self-examination which will bring us to a true self-knowledge here. There is need to ask ourselves what our own conception of religion is, and what the real inspiring motive of our religion—that which is, or is supposed to be, religion, in our own hearts and lives? In considering this question, and trying to get it honestly answered, let no one of us be content with the standard of those who measure themselves among themselves, but let us rather take the only true standard, that

of the divine relation and the divine love toward us. Then, if we do, in truth, desire to know what a sense of this relation should work in us, and really to attain it, let this inspired prayer be taken as our ideal: that He, "who is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named," would "grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend, with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God."

CHAPTER III.

DEVOUTNESS AN ELEMENT OF TRUE CHARACTER.

"A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway."—Acts x. 2.

"A DEVOUT man," that is, a man whose habitual tone of mind was devotional, inspired by religious affections and principles: a man who was habitually mindful of his relation to God, and whose conscience was quickened with a constant recognition of His righteous claim to reverent and loving obedience. The rest of the description follows as simply filling out the picture in detail: "One that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway."

The first important point for us to notice here, is that this man was—not one of the Apostles, not a priest, not a prophet, not a saint in any especial or exclusive sense—but simply a soldier; and that, too, in a heathen army: possibly, brought up a heathen, and, certainly, not more, in his relation to the kingdom of God, than a Jewish proselyte of the gate. He was captain of an Italian cohort, stationed in Cæsarea as body-guard of the Roman Procurator.

The plain inference, then, is, that the type of character here indicated is consistent with any calling and compatible with any occupation in life.

This is a truth which needs to be specially emphasized in the present day and generation. It is but too obvious that the tendency of life in this age is not towards devoutness. The influences and interests of our time aim in an opposite direction. The devout spirit is not the spirit of the age; and a devout man has come to be considered an exceptional kind of character. Indeed, it is very generally assumed, that devoutness must be exceptional: that, in the busy work of life, and amid the engrossing demands of its practical concerns, there can be no opportunity for the exercise of devout habits or the cultivation of devout affections or tastes. It is doubted by many, perhaps we may say the majority, if a devout character ought, on the whole or in the general, to be a matter of aspiration. Its place, if it have any place, is supposed to be only among those —such as the clergy and a few others—whose business is in religion; but in the common work of our weekday life it would be impracticable: quite out of keeping with the ordinary habits and legitimate interests of a man of work or of business; possible only in persons of special temperament, and

even in them a hindrance rather than a help in the part which they must needs take in carrying on the affairs of the world.

Now, this is worthy of serious consideration; and it is hardly possible to over-estimate the importance of right thinking and a true conclusion in this matter.

As Christians, or on the ground of Christian principles, the only possible conclusion is that devoutness should not be an exceptional type of character; that, on the contrary, it is obligatory upon all; that every person who receives the call of the Gospel of the Son of God receives therein a call, and that most imperative, to the submission of his heart and life to such a constant predominating recognition of his relation and obligations to God, as will inspire the whole tone and temper of his mind with the spirit of devoutness; and this so necessarily and universally, that no one can hope for acceptance with God, or for salvation under the conditions of the Gospel, whose spirit and temper is not so inspired, whose life and conversation, however busy or exemplary in other respects, is still unmoved by those principles and affections which are included in godliness and constitute the devout character.

So unquestionable is this, that it would seem superfluous to quote from the New Testament passages in proof of it: and yet there may be need of such references for reminders. We may need, especially if while professing to be Christians we are inclined to fall in with the modern way of thinking, to be brought face to face with the standard of character which is explicitly required by the teachings of our Lord and His inspired Apostles, and to ask ourselves plainly, what we suppose these teachings to mean and require of us.

We may consider, for this purpose, first, the type of character which is marked in the entire record of the earthly life of Jesus our Saviour. It is most certain that His was a devout life; most certain that a sense of his relation to God the Father, the maintenance of constant communion with Him, the devoted, faithful, and loving doing of His will, was the predominant motive by which the entire character of Jesus, in every relation and taking in its every deed and word, was swayed. The only question then for us is, whether we do or do not take that life for our example? If not, we can have no claim on His redeeming grace: but if it be so acknowledged, then, most

certainly devoutness must have its place, and must be the predominant trait in our own character. Like Him, it must be our meat and drink to do the will of God : like Him, communion with God must be the most real, most conscious, most pervasive and most sustaining experience of our hearts.

Take, next, His precepts and promises ; from first to last pointing heavenward, keeping the heavenly word and its relations, the obligations thereby imposed and the rewards therein secured,—keeping these ever before His disciples, and making them the supreme object and end of all endeavour or aspiration in life on earth. What is our acceptance of such teaching ? Can it be accepted in any real sense without lifting our life out of the low murky atmosphere of mere worldliness into the brightness of that light which cometh from heaven, and by which heaven, not earth, is seen and felt to be our true home ?

Take, again, the uniform admonitions and descriptions of the inspired Apostles. Do they rest in the inculcation of any virtues which are the possible products of an indevout temper ? Do they stop short, anywhere or for any person, of declaring godliness of mind and heart—that com-

munion with God, that habitual looking to Him, trusting in Him, seeking His will and aiming at His glory, which constitutes devoutness of spirit—to be the one essential and indispensable characteristic? The question then for us is, What do we take this to mean? and what does it really mean in practical application to our own hearts and lives? Are we content with respectable and becoming behaviour among our fellows in this world? Are we satisfied with even a punctilious performance of the ceremonial requirements and ritual regulations of the Christian Church? What possible part or lot, then, have we in that life whose affections are set on things above, not on things on the earth,—whose truest experience is that which finds satisfaction in no earthly object, but which is hid in sacred communion with Christ in God? What participation can we possibly claim in those characteristics which, in every Epistle and throughout the New Testament, are insisted upon as absolutely indispensable in the Apostolic ideal of the Christian character? In what possible sense can it be claimed that our "conversation is in heaven"? What possible application, in our own experience, of such a prayer as that which an Apostle presumed to offer for Christians whose

education and early training had been in no better school than that of heathenism?—that "Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God."

Surely it is very clear, that, if we make any claim to the Christian name, or presume to hope for salvation on Christian conditions, we must admit the indispensableness of a devout temper, of the habitual possession and exercise of those godly affections and principles which characterise the devout spirit, to be really known and felt in our own individual living experience, to do their perfect work within our hearts, and be the directing and moulding principles of our lives.

There are, beyond doubt, some very real and formidable hindrances which every one who has, or seeks to attain, this spirit must meet. There are hindrances within and without; both the flesh and the world are full of temptations to accept them as insurmountable, or to induce us only to a resistance so merely spasmodic, so hopeless and

faint-hearted, that it can result in nothing but failure.

There is, in the first place, to every one of us, the hindrance of a nature which is fallen, and which has inborn propensities, not spiritual, not towards godliness and the communion of Heaven, but carnal towards worldliness and sensual gratification. In just so far as these propensities have been indulged by any of us, they have grown into habitual strength ; in many, even so far as to have become predominant and all-controlling ; and in all, sufficient to require more than natural strength for their resistance. Hence the need of regenerating and sanctifying grace, which is one of the very first principles in the religion of Christ, and which by all Christian teachers is insisted on as an indispensable requisite for every person. Happy indeed are they who have been within the sphere of such grace from their very infancy, and whose inner motives have been ever under its influence. Happier still they who, from the first, have ever willingly submitted themselves to this blessed influence, so that the principles and affections of the regenerate nature have become their readiest and most spontaneous motives, quickening their thoughts, and stirring their impulses as by natural bent and inclination. In them, as in the

Divine Exemplar, the prince of this world finds nothing predisposed to his tempting power. Let it be granted that they are but the few. Let it be admitted that with the immense majority—the mass of mankind—the infection of nature is, not only an ineradicable taint of depraved birth, but a root of evil which has grown with their growth and strengthened with their strength. Still, we claim that there is no sufficient reason which any one within the sound of the Gospel may plead in justification or excuse for remaining devoid of at least the elementary experience of a devout spirit. The fallen condition of our nature has not left it entirely void of religious affections or insensible to religious obligations. As the covenant of grace was intended to include all men in its provisions, the influences of the Spirit of grace are so universally vouchsafed as to quicken devout impulses and aspirations in every human breast. Man is by nature, even in his fallen condition, a "religious animal"; and to be absolutely without religion is not only unchristian but unnatural; so unnatural as to be impossible except as the result of a lifelong disuse and suppression of impulses, affections, and aspirations, with which every human being is endowed, and by which our human nature is most characteristically distinguished from that of

the mere animal creation. For every such suppression or disuse a man must be held culpable; and if the end in any case be the final forfeiture of the spiritual heritage, it will be but the legitimate consequence of this sin against his own nature as well as against God.

On the other hand, with simply a true recognition, in the first place, of its requirements, and then an honest endeavour, fairly followed up and persisted in, to meet them, there is ever a sure concurrence and constant aid of divine grace sufficient for every need and equal to the surmounting of every hindrance. Then there is an added advantage of enlisting in the cultivation of devout characteristics, the powerful aid of the law of habit, by which every devout thought or feeling takes on an immense accumulative force and moves onward in the right direction with accumulative energy.

Let not, then, the thought, that the devout spirit is in any sense a necessarily exceptional thing, that it belongs to peculiar temperaments or is congenial only with some particular occupations, and therefore is not attainable except for some particular persons, —let not this thought have place in any mind even for a moment. The devout temper is simply the true temper in all human character; no human life

can be true which is not inspired by it; it is not only possible for all, but required of all, and therefore the only question in relation to it should be this—whether it has its rightful place or not in our character?

In considering this question, let us clearly understand what *character* really is, and how essential its place and purpose in all human life. We cannot see it, and must not look for it on the surface. That is the stage of activities, which are so largely dependent on circumstances, and determined by conventional proprieties, as to make them the criteria of little more than the texture of life. But, far down in its most solitary depth, there is in every life a vital spring of the impulses which give both tone and direction to the thoughts and feelings, the affections, aspirations, and principles, which constitute that person's character. It is true of every human being that the habitual tone and temper of his mind is determined by this secret influence within. It is also true that it is the most solemn and momentous of all the responsibilities of our individuality to determine that it be pure and true. We must be habitually either one or the other; devout, or indevout; God-fearing, or God-forgetting; spiritually minded, or carnal. The question for every one to

decide is, which? In this question is involved the determination of all that is essential in present being or in everlasting destiny.

CHAPTER IV.

CHRISTIAN HUMILITY.

"All of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility."—1 St. Peter v. 5.

IT is undoubtedly true that most of the practical precepts of Christianity are but a clear expression of those principles of righteousness which have been recognised and accredited universally by the human conscience ; and it does not detract in the least from the authority of the Gospel as a divine revelation if the substance of its morals may be found in the best schools of human philosophy. We should expect this. Unless we are prepared to rest in the monstrous theory that the fallen condition of our race is a state of entire exclusion from all the influences of divine grace, so that not even the conscience is enlightened with any of the inspirations of truth and holiness, we should expect that whatever apprehensions of right may have been granted through either the intuitions of reason or the judgment of experience would be, not contradicted, but confirmed by the clearer method of a direct revelation. We are not at all surprised if this is the fact : if something like the " Golden

Rule" of the Gospel is found among the sayings of Confucius; an approximation to its precepts of justice, mercy, and truth, in the philosophy of Plato; something like its recognition of a common brotherhood in the meditations of Marcus Antoninus.

Christian morality is by no means identical with human morality. It is, as we should also expect a divine revelation would be, far clearer in its directions and higher in its principles. Compare, in the very instances to which we have referred, the clear, explicit, authoritative precepts of Christ, with the hesitating, qualified, and uncertain utterances of the old heathen moralists: and it cannot be denied that the one bears the unquestionable impress of a divine revelation, while the other is marked by the up-reaching efforts of human wisdom. Nor is the superiority in clearness or practical explicitness only. There are, in the morals of Christianity, fundamental principles, which could never have been propounded or understood through any lower authority than that of revelation from above. Its first and greatest commandment—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind,"—this, plainly, could not have been given without the revelation of God in His personal character and relations. So

also with the prime virtue of the Gospel—faith, and, especially, faith in Christ as the Saviour: very clearly, this could not be inculcated or exercised without the revelation of the loving Father and the all-sacrificing Son. Not only toward God, but to our fellows also, the Christian revelation introduces new principles of duty as it discloses new relations. Our mutual obligations in all the relations of life—in the family, in business, in citizenship—are placed on much higher ground and invested with holier sanctions than it is, or could be, possible to find in any system of morality where the revelation had not been given. Even the common duty of mutual esteem and helpfulness is elevated, from the mere admission of a common race with its mutual needs, up into a realisation of loving intercommunion in the everlasting relationship of a common brotherhood.

There is at least one entire class of precepts which are found only in Christian teaching—viz., those which designate and inculcate *humility* as a grace or virtue: such, for instance, as the following, in the teachings of our Saviour. "Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth." "Whosoever shall humble himself as a

little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven." "Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever would be chief among you, let him be your servant; even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." "He that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." Likewise in the inspired teachings of his Apostles. "Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering." "Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory; but in holiness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." "Humble yourselves in the sight of God, and He shall lift you up."

These and many other similar texts are parallel with the passage in which the Apostle directs us to "be clothed with humility": to put it on and have it girt about us—a peculiarly betokening characteristic of the Christian temper.

Nothing like this class of precepts can be found in any heathen or unchristian moralist. The old Roman word for virtue meant *bravery*, manly, self-reliant heroism: the Greek word meant that which is *beautiful* or *becoming*. There was no place in

either conception for humility as a possible grace or element of a virtuous character. The reason is clear. Because, without the revelation of the loving condescension of Almighty God and of the voluntary humility of His only-begotten Son, there was really no basis for it.

In any system it is true, indeed, that vanity—that is, an inordinate estimation of our own merit—is counted blameworthy ; but humility is more than a freedom from vanity ; the precepts of the Gospel plainly imply in it a lowly estimation of our own merits and a subjection of ourselves to others. Now, if men simply compare themselves among themselves, if there be no higher standard than the common average of human worth, what reason would require that any one should esteem other better than himself ? If I stand with my brother or my neighbour simply on that ground, why should I or he have or desire to have any other than a fair and just estimation of our mutual capabilities ? If I am as strong, or as wise, or as virtuous, as he, why should I not be aware of it, and, if necessary, assert it ? What effect could my self-depreciation have, except to beget insincerity of feeling and expression in myself, and to foster vanity and arrogance in him ? It is no wonder, then, that we do not find humility

reckoned as a virtue in any human system of morality. For, in the mutual obligations of mere human relationships, there is really no basis for it and no propriety in it. The only rule which even modesty would prescribe, on that ground, is, that no one should claim for himself more than a true estimate of his merits would fairly entitle him to.

Let us come now into the light of the revelation of the Son of God. Let us come, all alike, in our common human qualities, not without our several endowments of capability, but yet conscious, every one, of shortcomings and personal failures, and therefore really dissatisfied every one with himself, and wishing that he were something better than he is;—let us come thus to the disclosures of revelation: let us then learn what Almighty God, the Creator of heaven and earth, is towards us; what He hath done for us, what we owe to Him, and on what conditions we hold our several allotments in this life;—and how could it be longer possible for us to have any other than a lowly estimation of ourselves, or not to wish that we might be ever more and more helpful to others? Consider what the revelation discloses to us to this effect

It is a revelation, first and chiefest, of GOD. It

makes Him known to us, not only as the Almighty Creator and Ruler of the universe, but as the Author of our being, the great Father who made us for Himself, who loveth us and desireth our love. It tells us how this world in which we have our present life came to be in its present disordered state, and how insensibility to our divine relationship and alienation in our affections from God came to be, as we know they are, possible and even natural in our characteristics. Then it disclosed to us the all-merciful compassion of God: that He willeth not that any should be lost, but would have all men to be saved. It reveals to us the consenting will of His only-begotten Son; and tells of His self-sacrifice, infinite in its nature and worth, but perfectly willing and all-loving in motive: how that He, very God of very God, became very man, and in His manhood set an example to all men in righteousness and true holiness, and finished His earthly life by the offering up of Himself on the cross as a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world.

Such a revelation must needs affect, and that very thoroughly, our sense of relationship and of obligations toward both God and our fellow-men. As before God, the Father who so loved and cared for

us and the Son who submitted to so infinite a sacrifice for our redemption, how penitent, how contrite, how self-abased in our conviction of unworthiness and sinfulness, ought we to be! Then, in relation to our fellow-sinners,—inasmuch as they with us were involved in a common calamity, and have been made partakers of a common redemption,—what mutual sympathy and mutual helpfulness should be excited in the common gratitude to the Divine Redeemer! And, since in His great redemptive work He became our Elder Brother and in that our perfect Exemplar, what common emulation should there be to have within us all the impulses of His Spirit and to fashion our entire life and character in His likeness!

Here we have in Christian Ethics the basis of humility and its indispensable obligation. It is no mere characteristic of natural temperament. It is no mere nervous diffidence, nor self-conscious bashfulness, nor inexperienced timidity, nor formal modesty. It requires no affected nor even sincere depreciation of the good gifts and endowments of mind, body, or estate, which it hath pleased God, our Father, of His bounty to bestow upon us. It consists not in the utterance of technical religious phrases, which, however true originally as expressions

of unworthiness, have become, in the repetition, but meaningless cant ; nor even in a sense of unworthiness is it to be found, if that sense be only technical and held only as a general requirement of religion. But it is just this, and nothing but this (v. 3) : the having within ourselves, ruling our dispositions, directing our tempers, moulding and fashioning our entire lives, *the mind of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.* It has its root in a true apprehension of His condescension to us and our consequent admission to union with Him. It has its outworking under the constant desire to realise in ourselves the characteristic inspirations of His Spirit, and to be, more and more truly in heart and life, one with Him, because He hath condescended to be One with us. He was "meek and lowly" : in Him this was, indeed, the result of an infinite condescension of love, to which in us there can be no parallel. But, for us, in view of it, how despicably insolent is anything like pride or vanity ! How only becoming, and how indispensable in truth of character, a deep prostration of spirit, a convicted confession of our unworthiness, a grateful self-renunciation in accepting the provisions of the great sacrifice, and a tender sympathy in every fibre of our souls with all for whom, in common with us, He made Himself,

through such condescension and sacrifice, the Saviour!

Humility is clearly, then, not only a Christian virtue, but it is, as the Apostle represents it, a peculiarly characteristic virtue of the Christian: for to be clothed upon with humility is nothing less than to have "put on the Lord Jesus," and to have His Spirit animating and ruling our entire life. In this sense, the call comes to every disciple of Christ, for a personal application of the Apostolic precept, "All of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility." We see how subjection to others, or self-sacrifice for the good of others, is here connected with humility, and we understand why it is so connected: because, in the Apostle's conception, to be humble is simply to be Christ-like. He—the only begotten Son of God, almighty and everlasting—made Himself of no reputation; took upon Him the form of a servant; submitted to every species of privation, of indignity, of reproach, for the purpose of saving our sinful world! His example is our model. Ours, indeed, in very humble measure and degree; for we are sinners, while He is all holy; we need to look up in adoring faith and grateful love from the abasement of penitence, while in Him the condescension was the voluntary

sacrifice of love infinitely compassionate; but still, in saving us, He identifies Himself with us, and takes all our poor endeavours into sanctified union with His perfect righteousness. Therefore we may and should be humble; therefore we should be subject one to another; and while all are alike in the need of penitent prostration before God, each has in love the strongest motive to esteem other better than himself. "Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering." "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Participation in His humility is one essential qualification for participation in His holiness.

CHAPTER V.

THE GREATNESS OF HUMILITY.

"Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven."—ST. MATT. xviii. 4.

TO see clearly the bearing and import of this saying of our Lord, it is necessary to recall the circumstances preceding as well as those connected with the occasion on which it was uttered.

It was near the close of His ministry, and He had just made with His disciples an extensive tour throughout Galilee. On this tour He had spoken to them, more freely than ever before, about His kingdom and the position which they were to occupy in it. He had also seemed to intimate that to some of them might be assigned a higher rank than to others; or, at least, that they might not all be admitted to the same degree of intimate confidence with Him. He had permitted only three of their number—viz., Peter, and James, and John—to see His glory on the Mount of Transfiguration; and to Peter alone He had said: "Thou art Peter, and upon this Rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it: and I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be

bound in heaven ; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven."

It was, as we may well suppose, the seeming preference, thus shown, that led to a discussion among the disciples as to their relative claims to distinction in the Messiah's kingdom ; and, the Evangelist tells us, " they disputed among themselves who should be greatest." This was on the way, as they were going towards Capernaum. Our Lord, though aware of their disputation, seemed to have taken no notice of it at the time. When they had entered into that town and had come into the house where they sojourned, He called them around Him and asked : " What is it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way ? " In the consciousness of having indulged a temper which He would not approve, they made no reply. Then He called a little child, and set him in the midst of them, and said : " Verily, I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

Wonderful words these ! They must have seemed very wonderful to the disciples at the time. They were such words as had never been heard on earth

before. Christ Himself had, indeed, said something like it in His Sermon on the Mount, when He pronounced a blessing on the meek and poor in spirit. He had also, we cannot doubt, more than once in His intercourse with His disciples, taught them in words, as He continually showed them by His example, that His service required humility and would not tolerate pride and self-conceit. What He teaches them here is not only that humility rather than pride is acceptable with God, but also that in His kingdom on earth the standard of distinction was to be directly the reverse of that which had always obtained in the world, so that the humblest man should be esteemed the greatest, and the man who would seek the least for himself should obtain the most. Taking a little child, free, as little children are, from pride, from ambition, from lust, from any disposition or skill to scheme for its own advantage, He placed this child before them, and said: "Whosoever shall humble himself *as this little child*, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

Were the disciples able to understand this saying then? It is very doubtful. This is, in truth, a hard saying: a saying which cannot be really understood by any but those who have been fully taught by the Spirit of Christ. The men of this world

have never been able to understand it. In all their schemes for the attainment of greatness this rule has no place. They know how to be great, by superseding, and supplanting, and over-mastering others ; they know how to become great, by getting rich, by making themselves distinguished, by obtaining power ; they covet such greatness, and are universally striving for it : but, to be great as Christ here directs, to be great by an absolute abandonment of selfishness, by an entire withdrawal of their minds and hearts from all schemes for their own aggrandisement, by becoming as unscheming, unambitious, artless, unsuspicious, unpretending, and lowly minded as a little child ! that is something they do not understand, an attainment they do not covet.

Do we understand it ? We, who profess and call ourselves Christians, who have had the advantage of growing up in the school of Christ from our very infancy, and who have the history of eighteen centuries in which to learn how the principles of His religion are exemplified : do we understand what is meant by the *greatness* of *humility ?* how it is that we may become more eminent than all, not through any process of self-exaltation, but by humbling ourselves lower than all, by being like children among proud, ambitious, and selfish men ?

"Oh yes," some may be ready to answer, "we understand it very well. It means that we are not to be self-righteous: that we are not to expect to be saved on account of any merits of our own, but only through the atonement of Christ; and that, in order to have an interest in that atonement, we must confess ourselves to be guilty before God, having the spirit of the Publican who said: 'God be merciful to me a sinner,' instead of that of the Pharisee who boasted of his own righteousness."

Very well. If you understand this to be its meaning, you have, at least, a glimpse of the truth. But are you quite sure that you understand correctly even this much? You are using *technical* language. It is language with which we have always been familiar, as it is found in the Bible, and there is no slight danger of self-deception in using it. There is not infallible evidence that we really understand what Christian humility is, in the mere fact that we are accustomed to use the language which expresses it. A man may be very proud, intensely selfish, and devoted with his whole soul to his own aggrandisement, and yet be accustomed to speak of himself in very pious and humble phrases, and even to make a sort of boast of his freedom from self-righteousness or anything like dependence on his

own meritoriousness. Nor does this necessarily involve conscious insincerity. For if one have, as many do have, a mere technical conception of human depravity and its cure in justification, he may really be sincere in confessing himself a miserable sinner, without the slightest abatement of his pride. If I understand, when I confess myself a sinner before God, and as such justly deserving of His wrath, that I am only making an orthodox statement of the guilty condition of our fallen nature, and if I therefore mean merely to confess that I am in the same unhappy category with all others of mankind, and have not at the same time any distinct consciousness of my own individual shortcomings and sins,—why, then I may make this confession in the strongest scriptural terms and be sincere in making it, and yet be full of the spirit of self-conceit and self-seeking. Ay, in the very use of this confession I may find food for pride, since I may think myself, because of it, to be singled out for God's favour above others. So the declaration of St. Paul, "By the grace of God I am what I am," may be perverted into a self-conceited boast that I am a special favourite of the Almighty.

To fulfil the conditions of humility, as our Lord defined it, it is not enough that we confess, nor even

that we feel, ourselves to be guilty in the sight of God and destitute of any righteousness of our own to merit His approbation. That is indeed properly involved in humility; but it is only one of its conditions, and may be a very imperfect one.

What then, are the essential characteristics of Christian humility, in the full sense of the term? It was illustrated by our Lord, as we have seen, by referring to the characteristics of a little child. To be humble, then, is to be *childlike.*

Nothing is so characteristic of the spirit of a little child as its freedom from all the feelings which constitute pride. How unpretending is a little child! How unambitious and unscheming it is! how unsuspicious and unenvious! how little it cares for artificial distinctions! and yet how true is its estimate of its own condition and qualities! A little child is weak and helpless. It is instinctively conscious of this, and therefore trusts implicitly in the strong and able. It is ignorant. Conscious of this, it submits itself to the guidance of the wise. Its ultimate destiny is in other and higher hands than its own; therefore it engages in no independent and self-reliant schemes for its own advantage. So, in relation to its companions of equal age, it makes no pretension above others on the score of any

artificial or conventional distinction. One little child neither esteems nor despises another on account of any difference merely of condition. The child of a master will play with the child of a slave; the child of a king will associate, without any assumption of superiority, with the child of a peasant. But they are each equally conscious of real distinctions. If the one be really stronger or wiser than the other, this difference is very soon felt and recognised. Withal, how tender-hearted are little children! how sympathising! how instinctively they weep with them that weep and laugh with them that laugh! How utterly incapable they are of desiring, much more of plotting for, their own exaltation, to the disadvantage and injury of others!

When, therefore, our Lord pointed to a little child, and told His disciples to be humble like it, we cannot doubt that such are the characteristics which He desired them to have.

Such are, in truth, the essential characteristics of Christian humility. We are here in the world all alike creatures of God. We are all alike dependent and helpless creatures. We have nothing, and can have nothing, except what He permits us to have. We cannot even breathe a single breath of life without His permission and

power. Besides, we are only inferior creatures: there is no comparison between us and our Creator, and we are lower than His angels. They are wiser and stronger than we, and occupy a much higher sphere. Moreover we are *sinful* creatures; our nature is depraved; it has had admitted into it evil qualities, and we are subjected to their influence. This faith and corruption of our nature deserves in itself God's wrath and condemnation, and it involves us all in heinous actual guilt. An all-righteous God could not look upon us with approbation—He could not look upon us with anything but condemnation—if He had not, in His infinite mercy, provided for our regeneration and justification by the Incarnation and Sacrificial Death of His only-begotten Son.

Such being our real state and condition, there is, most certainly, no reason for anything like pride on our part. To be proud and pretentious in such a case is to be absurdly foolish, and must expose us to the contempt, and, if they are capable of such a feeling, to the derision, of the spirits of heaven.

To be humble: why, what is that, but just to have a true sense of what we are? What is it, but to feel that we are, as we are, poor, weak, helpless, ignorant, and sinful creatures: without

any claim upon God's favour save that which His infinite mercy has granted to us through Christ, His Son, our Lord? What is it but to feel that we cannot, as we cannot, even think a good thought as of ourselves, and therefore to trust implicitly to the guidance of God's good Spirit? Then, in relation to our fellow-men, what is it but to see and feel both their and our true condition and to be free from any pretensions that are inconsistent with it? If none of us have anything that we have not received; if we are all alike dependent on God for life, and breath, and all things; if we are all alike placed by Him in the positions which we severally occupy, for no other purpose than that of probation, to give us an opportunity to serve Him and fit ourselves for His heavenly kingdom: if, therefore, our real differences of character and condition lie deeper than those which depend on conventional distinctions:—why, then it becomes us to see and feel all this. When we do see and feel it, then are we truly humble.

Now we are prepared to understand the apparent paradox that to be truly humble is to be truly great. By the depravity of our nature there is in all of us a disposition to seek independently of God, to act as though we were wiser than He and

could find our own way to happiness. This is the working of pride : and to counteract it is to learn, and submit ourselves to the influence of, humility. Therefore, as a great preacher of our mother Church has well said, "It is scarcely too much to say that in becoming humble, we become all which is demanded of us by the Gospel ; since this mastery of pride must include or promote the subjugation of every passion which opposes our entrance into the kingdom of heaven. Where, then," he asks, "the cause for surprise if humility be represented as the high road to greatness ? The truly humble man must be, so far as character and achievements are concerned, the truly great man. I call not that man great who has conquered a nation, if he have failed, after all, to conquer himself. True greatness must be moral greatness, greatness of soul, that nobility of spirit which proves that as a man he has measured his duration, and found himself indestructible. And I recognise this greatness, not necessarily when a man has a world bowing at his footstool, but when he is himself bowing at the footstool of God. The rebel against lawful authority cannot be truly great ; the slave of his own passions cannot be truly great ; the idolater of his own powers cannot

be truly great: and the proud man is this rebel, this slave, this idolater; for pride spurns at the divine dominion, gives vigour to depraved affections, and exaggerates all our powers." * What, then, can be truer than to say that pride destroys the chief elements of a great character, and therefore, that in order to have such a character one must first become humble as a little child?

There is yet another reason why the humblest man is the greatest. A humble spirit is pre-eminently the spirit of Christ. He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many. Being in the form of God, so that He thought it not robbery to be equal with God, He made Himself of no reputation, but took upon Him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of man. Having submitted to this humiliation, how unpretending and self-denying He was! How He stooped to every kind of indignity, and endured every form of hardship, and undertook every species of toil, for the benefit of poor and suffering men! To be humble is to be like Him; and to be like Him is, without question, to be truly great. He became the Redeemer of all by first becoming the Servant of all. The path of humilia-

* Melville, Sermons, vol. ii., p. 271.

tion was His way to greatness; and that not only as entitling Him to be raised up to the right hand of the Father, and restored to the glory which He had with the Father before the world began, but also in the sphere of His human life, and the estimation of the world itself. His example introduced an entirely new standard, for both measuring and achieving greatness. Foolish men are still bent on seeking aggrandisement by the old methods. They still set up their idols of silver and gold, and shout with the old idolaters, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" they still indulge in the pompous utterance of great swelling words of vanity, and hold men's person in admiration; but even the world itself has outgrown all this, and counts it mere child's play. Its truly great men, the men whose names are permanently ennobled and whose memories are cherished in its annals, are not such as Cæsar or Crœsus, but such as have been willing to suffer the loss of all things, not counting their lives dear unto themselves, if so be they might, in some sense, be savers of others after the pattern of the great Saviour Christ.

This, then, is the true standard, and it is no longer a paradox, even in the world's hearing, to speak of the greatness of humility. We do not ask if any

desire such greatness, for to desire it is to lose it. The Christian rule is that we are simply to be like Christ,—like Him, seek not our own but others' advantage,—like Him, condescend to the condition and sympathise with the feelings of the poor and the suffering,—like Him, make it the purpose of our life to do them good: and then, though we seek it not, it will assuredly be our award to be accounted great in the only sense that is worthy of a man; great in usefulness, and thereby great in the appreciative esteem of men and the approving smile of God. It is a truth which is applicable in all time and to the case of every individual that "Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abaseth; and whosoever humbled himself shall be exalted."

CHAPTER VI.

CHRISTIAN FORGIVENESS.

"So likewise shall my Heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses."—ST. MATTHEW xviii. 35.

THE parable of the unmerciful servant, of which this verse is our Lord's own application, was called out by the question of Peter: "Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him?" This question seems to have been prompted by the direction respecting the treatment of an offending brother, which we find in an earlier part of this chapter: "If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more; that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established: and if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the Church: but if he neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican."

There can be no doubt that other teachings of our Lord on this subject had told on the minds of the disciples and roused them to questioning as to the

duty of forgiveness and its possible limitation in the Christian religion. It is true that this was one of the subjects which was marked with peculiar emphasis in our Lord's teachings, and one which, in respect of the prominence given to it and the light in which it was put by Him, made a very notable point wherein His ethical system stood out in advance of all others. Very significantly in the Sermon on the Mount—the first great proclamation of the practical requirements of His religion—this was one of the leading illustrations, to show the advance in the temper and practice of life which He proposed to make above that of even the most accredited teachers of religion among the Jews: "Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth; but I say unto you that ye resist not evil. Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy: but I say unto you, Love your enemies; do good to them which hate you; bless them that despitefully use you and persecute you: that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? for sinners also love those that love them. And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? Do not even the publicans so? But

love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend hoping for nothing again ; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest : for He is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil."

Had His teachings on this subject been confined to these perceptive utterances they would have been sufficiently characteristic ; but we all know that in the same sermon He put the stamp of fundamental and universal obligation upon the forgiving temper, by making it an indispensable condition of acceptable prayer : " After this manner, therefore, pray ye . . . . forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you ; but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

While these teachings are very familiar to our ears, it is worth while for us to understand that they were not familiar to the men who were listening to our Lord on the Mount or to any men on earth in that day and generation. On the contrary, they were new teachings, and very startling. It may not be true, perhaps, to say that forgiveness of enemies was then for the first time recognised or inculcated as a duty ; for the records of the Old Testament are not wanting in striking examples of

a forgiving spirit under malignant persecution ; and even heathens had learned that the rigorous edicts of justice should be tempered by the softening hand of mercy. Never before had forgiveness been put in such a light, never before inculcated so unqualifiedly or required so universally and fundamentally, as it was in the religion of Christ ; never before had it been plainly said that men *must love* their enemies, and bless their hateful persecutors, and do good to all wrong-doers. Never before had the precept been given as a fundamental law, with the connection of its thenceforth inseparable condition : forgive, or ye shall not be forgiven.

We are familiar, as the world then was not, with all this teaching, and are not startled, as the men of that generation were, in listening to such utterances. Nay, we are accustomed to hear them among the commonplaces of our religion, and assent to them as a matter of course. Why should we not ? They are in the New Testament. They are learned as lessons in our schools. They are read in our churches. The duty, or rather the whole class of duties, is unmistakably recognised and admitted in our every-day prayers. Of course, then, we assent to it all, and mean, as we profess, to live by it.

Ah! that is just the point: do we mean really to live by it? Are these teachings of Christ anything more to us in fact than commonplaces of His religion? Are they, in very truth, taken as *the law* by which our spirit and temper, in all the intercourse of life, are regulated and determined? With entire honesty of intention, it is quite possible that in this case, as in others, we may have allowed a general assent to the teachings of Christ to be put in the place of their specific application in daily living. Even this assent may be only a dreamy acceptance of familiar phraseology without thought of its meaning or practical import.

Let us try now to clear away any such indefiniteness by considering exactly what this doctrine of Christ concerning the forgiveness of enemies means for us and requires of us.

In the first place, then, it does not mean that we are to regard all persons with equal confidence or receive all to equal familiarity. On this point, as on some others, the conception of Christian requirements which is commonly entertained needs correction. The Christian temper is not inconsistent with the clear or even keen discrimination. Its amiability is not that of mere flabby good nature, or of gushing sentimentality. Its charity, though

it finds no pleasure in iniquity, is sure ever to rejoice in the truth. It is unquestionably true that there are in the world countless divergencies both of condition and character, which may and should vary the degrees of assimilation with one and another. As a Christian man I have no right to be prejudiced against, or to harbour any degree of unkindness, or treat with any shade of injustice, one who differs from me in condition, colour, race, or any other respect; but in the differences there may be incongruities which are unfavourable for the enjoyment on either side, and perhaps even at conflict with the propriety, of very familiar intercourse. Then again, it is sadly true in the experience of us all that one and another, with whom we have been associated from time to time, has proved, in the hard struggle of life, false in friendship, and malignant in opposition. Does Christian charity require a forgiving spirit towards such persons? Unquestionably it does, and that even to the extinguishment of the slightest grudge; but forgiveness does not necessarily restore the former relations. They may be restored. The evidence of thorough reformation, as well as repentance, may be such as to deserve a restoration; but until that be given the case calls for discrimination, which is both

prudent and equitable, between that which is and that which is not worthy of trust. If I have found one to be, not an honest man, but a thief, I am not required by Christian charity to trust him with my goods ; and if one has betrayed my confidence and proved treacherous to the interests of friendship, it is equally unnecessary, and indeed impossible, for me to intrust him further with my secrets, or hold him within the terms of familiar and confiding intercourse.

This, then, we may safely say, is a proper qualification of Christian forgiveness, that it does not involve indifference to trustworthiness or indiscrimination between the true and the false.

In the second place we may admit that it does not require entire freedom from anger or even from persistent indignation. Primarily, as a mere emotion, anger is the instinctive resistance of physical sensitiveness against injury, or harm, or annoyance of any sort ; and as such it is manifested in young children before they are capable of distinguishing between right and wrong, and even in brute creatures which are supposed to be without moral sense. But in men and women, who are capable of distinguishing between right and wrong, and who are under the obligation to such discrimination in all their conduct,

anger has another and far higher function. Besides physical sensitiveness, there should be in them a clear and keen moral sense; and, therefore, they must needs be morally sensitive, that is, their aversion must be excited—it ought to be always, and will be just in proportion to the fidelity of the moral sense—against every exhibition of injustice and wrong. Since aversion to wrong is with them not a mere emotional impulse, but a settled principle, there should be in them a persistent indignation until the injustice is removed and the wrong corrected. When the Lord Jesus, who was the very incarnation of loving compassion, saw His Father's house profaned by dealers in earthly pelf, it is expressly recorded that He was angry; and it is plain that His indignation passed from the emotional impulse into settled aversion, when He made a whip and drove the traffickers out of the sacred courts. Not inconsistent, then, with the Christian temper, let us clearly understand, but rather a very legitimate quality in it, is a quickness of the moral sense, and its steady and uncompromising persistence in resisting every species of injustice and opposing every form of wrong. We must add that there is no one thing which is more needed in our modern Christianity, and for the lack of which it is sadly

limp and powerless, than a clear recognition and exercise of this function of the Christian conscience. When it shall come to be understood, if we may hope it ever will, that the Christian temper means a determination of the character through and through for truth and right, the Christian temper will be no longer a synonym for amiable weakness, and the office of righteous indignation will cease to be a puzzle to men and women enlisted as soldiers and sworn to a lifelong fight for God and His Christ.

Admitting the consistency with the Christian temper of this general aversion to wrong, the question is, how far this aversion is modified, or in what way regulated, by the requirement of Christian forgiveness, when the wrong is done directly to ourselves? Certainly the essential principles of the Christian temper must remain unchanged. Wrong is wrong: and, as such, abominable in God's sight; and the nearer that we approach to His likeness the more decidedly so it will appear in ours wherever and however it be exhibited: therefore we may be allowably and righteously indignant when the encroachments of wrong are felt in our own persons or to the detriment of our own interests. We may refuse to accept any term of compromise with it: we may

resist it and have recourse to the lawful tribunals for redress and for equitable reparation.

Where, then, do we find the office, or look for the effectual operation, of the spirit of forgiveness ?

Clearly, in three very important particulars.

1. *The forgiving spirit harbours no such thought or feeling as that of revenge.* It never seeks to inflict wrong because one has suffered wrong. Its aversion may be decided, it may be even indignant ; but it is righteous only as it is a settled principle of resistance to wrong as such, and that in ourselves equally as in others. Therefore, there can be in it no taint of malice, no possible wish to get satisfaction for a grudge by inflicting harm upon one by whom we have been harmed. If reparation be sought, it must be clearly for the sake of truth and equity ; not in any manner or degree for revenge.

2. Again, Christian forgiveness requires that *we hold ourselves ever ready, and that most heartily, for any possible opportunity to do good* to one whose wrong we are, at the same time, withstanding. Its regulative effect upon the temper must be not only of a negative character, to exclude malice and revengeful spite ; but also as very positively charged with pitying tenderness and loving compassion. It looks upon the wrong-doer as himself the most

pitiable victim of wrong, and counts its own but a leper wound in the common suffering. Therefore, its very pain quickens the nerves of sympathy ; and the more grievous the sense of wrong, the more hearty the readiness to bring into its place the ameliorating influence of goodness.

3. One other point yet remains. Christian forgiveness *is self-sacrificing*. It is not only unrevengeful, not only pitiful and of tender mercy, but it is a spirit which "seeketh not its own," which "counts not its life dear unto it," and which is "ready to suffer the loss of all things" if so be it may remove the guilt and lessen the suffering of sin. In a word, it is the Spirit of Christ, who gave Himself for us when we were sinners against Him. From His example it draws its inspiration, and in gratitude for His mercy it finds its most fervent incentive. Only it never fails to recognise this infinite disparity between His forgiveness of us and any mercy that we are capable of exercising toward our fellows: He was spotless and knew no sin, while of us it is sadly true that there is "none good, no, not one," and there is no boon of pardon that we can grant, which is not far exceeded by that which we need.

How, then, can we as Christians refuse forgiveness to any offending brother? Or, how can the for-

giveness be in any measure stinted or half-hearted? how can it be other than free, full, and complete? Only so may we have any well-grounded hope for participation in the Saviour's promise: "If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will likewise forgive you." As, on the other hand, our own conscience cannot but acquiesce in the justice of the opposite sentence: "So likewise, shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses."

CHAPTER VII.

CHRISTIAN ANGER.

"Be ye angry, and sin not."—EPHESIANS iv. 26.

CAN we be angry, and sin not? Is not anger itself essentially and necessarily sinful? Is it not simply the ebullition of a wicked temper? How then can its indulgence, or even its exhibition, on any occasion be without sin?

Such questions indicate the first impression of many, perhaps of most, persons, on hearing or reading this text with any thoughtful apprehension of its purpose. But on reflection it must be evident that, in the Apostle's conception, there must have been some place for anger which is not only not sinful but perfectly right and even obligatory. We need not, indeed, understand the words, "be ye angry," as a precept to the indulgence or exhibition of anger; for the sense, no doubt is, though ye be angry, sin not. It clearly means that we may be angry, and yet be in that respect entirely free from fault or occasion of blame.

It is worth while for us to consider this subject with some degree of thoughtful attention. It may

clear up in our minds certain very important, but commonly neglected and much misunderstood, points in Christian ethics; and so, with God's grace, it may have the effect to free our consciences from mistaken scruples, and enable us to govern our thoughts and feelings rightly and form our temper in a true Christian direction.

In the first place, then, it is important to understand clearly that anger, in itself, is simply a natural impulse in resisting or opposing hurt or annoyance of any kind. It is simply instinctive; just as much so as the impulse to shut the eyes suddenly on the sudden approach of any object that may be hurtful. As such it has no moral quality; as it is found in little children who are as yet unconscious of wrong, and even in the lower animals who are devoid of what we know as the moral sense.*

It may be possible to conceive of life so perfect in all its conditions and circumstances, as to be free from any possible occasion for an impulse or affection of this sort. We think of the heavenly state as so peaceful, because so ruled by the principles of perfect righteousness, that anger can have no reason for its existence, or, certainly, no place for its exhibi-

* See Bishop Butler's Sermons upon Human Nature. (Upon Resentment.) Sermon viii.

tion there. But in such a world as this, and with the conditions of life which there are here, we can see that anger, in the sense that we have now defined it, has a very clear protective purpose.

It certainly serves this purpose as it is exhibited in all the lower orders of the animal creation. Very clearly it is in them a stimulating impulse to the resistance of violence which, if not resisted, would often be destructive. As clearly it serves the purpose not only of defence against such attacks, but, perhaps even more frequently, of preventing them. Dr. Chalmers, in illustrating this point, says: "The first demonstration of a violence to be offered on the one hand, when met by the preparation and the countenance of an incipient resentment on the other, not only repels the aggression after it has begun, but still more frequently, we believe, through the reaction and the restraint of fear on the otherwise attacking party, prevents the aggression from being made. The stout and formidable antagonists eye each other with a sort of mutual respect; and, as if by a common though tacit consent, wisely abstain on either side from molestation, and pass onward without a struggle. It is thus that many a fierce contest is forborne, which, but for the operation of anger on the one side and fear upon the

other, would most certainly have been entered upon. And so by a system or machinery of reciprocal checks and counteractives, and where the mental affections too perform the part of essential forces, there is not that incessant warfare of extermination which might have depopulated the world."

There can be no question that anger as a natural impulse serves this useful purpose not only among the lower animals, but also in human society. It is here not less truly an instrument of defence against aggressions of violence or injustice, and it is here even more effectual, not only in resisting such aggressions when actually made, but also in checking and preventing them. "No one can tell," as Dr. Chalmers forcibly adds on this point, "how much we are indebted for the blandness and the amenity of human companionships, to the consciousness of so many sleeping fires, in readiness to blaze forth at the touch or on the moment of any provocation being offered. There can be no question that in all society this consciousness, though latent, never ceases to act as a powerful restraint on everything that is offensive. The domineering insolence of those who, with the instrument of anger too, would hold society in bondage, is most effectually arrested when met by anger which throws back the fear upon

themselves, and so quiets and composes all their violence. There is a kind of moral power in the anger itself, that is separate from the animal or physical strength which it puts into operation; and which invests it with command, or at least provides with defensive armour those who would otherwise be the most helpless of our species—so that decrepit age or feeble womanhood has, by the mere rebuke of an angry countenance, made the stoutest heart to tremble before them. It is a moral force, by which the inequalities of muscular force are repaired; and while itself a firebrand and destroyer, yet, by the very terror of its ravages, which it diffuses among all, were it to stalk at large over the world, does it contribute to the maintenance of harmony and peace, and to the exercise of kindly consideration and courteous attention in the intercourse of human life." *

While it is possible for us to see, and right to recognise, these restraining and protective uses, which anger as a natural impulse, plainly serves in the economy of life, it is as unquestionably true that it is useful or harmless only when it is itself under control; true, that like the fire and the flood, its

* Bridgewater Treatise: On the Moral and Intellectual Constitution of Man, chapter v.

power, if unrestrained and undirected, is only to ravage and destroy. It is for us a truth of still more practical importance, that in the Christian character every natural impulse is to be taken up, and guided, and tempered, by the higher principles of reason and virtue. It is in the application and practical influence of these principles that we are to find the exemplification of the Apostle's precept, "Be ye angry, and sin not."

In the first place, as our character is, all the while from earliest childhood, forming for better or worse, we are to see to it that we keep ourselves, as life goes on, growing in spiritual strength to check and hold under due control this, with all the other impulses of our lower nature. We may be amused in seeing in little children the sudden outbursts of an angry temper on the slightest provocation; we may be even interested in noting it as the mark of a high spirit, which, if rightly governed, will be a strong force in the character; but to see such sudden and unreasonable outbursts in persons of mature age is very pitiable, and we rightly deem them inexcusable, for we consider, or certainly ought to consider, such moral weakness the proof of a lamentable failure in the growth of life. It is, of course, admitted that there are great

differences in natural temperament, and so, that the self-government which all need is much more difficult for some than for others ; but to say that one has naturally a quick temper is no sufficient excuse for him, or for her, to be continually or habitually at the mercy of that temper. On the contrary, so much the stronger is the reason for its resistance, so much more imperatively pressing the obligation to cultivate in the character an habitual submission to the influences of divine grace, and to hold oneself under the ruling guidance of the principles of reason and of Christian virtue, by which such a temper would be controlled and regulated. This, then, is the first point in fulfilling the Apostle's precept : to learn, and to keep learning more and more as life goes on, to hold our angry impulses habitually and decidedly in subjection to reason and principle, so that we may become less and less irritable, less and less easily provoked, and especially that we be less and less liable to be angry without cause, less and less likely to fly into sudden passion on the mere unreasoning impulse. So, we shall be growing less and less within the power of an inflammable spirit, less and less at the mercy of its sudden ebullitions, and more and more able to discriminate rightly, and to be governed by the

discrimination, so that if it must sometimes needs be that we be angry, it may be sure to be with sufficient cause, and, in that respect, without sin.

Supposing this much achieved in our temper,—supposing that we are not liable, or at least are becoming not liable, to feel the excitement of causeless anger,—and supposing, therefore, that if at any time we have an angry impulse, it is with good cause,—then it is a still more important point for us to know what to do with that impulse, how to hold it under due restraint and direction. The proverb tells us that "the fool's wrath is presently known"; by which is signified that the fool—that, is the person who is devoid of reason and principle—is entirely in the power of his excited temper, so that it rages and ravages at its own malignant will. In that case it matters little whether there were, or were not, originally any sufficient occasion for the excitement: reasonable or unreasonable in its origin, it is equally unregulated and pernicious in its effects. "The prudent man," on the contrary, "concealeth shame": and prudence in the proverb implies the possession and governing influence of all the principles of reason and of godliness, which make man the master of his passions to hold them in due subordination, and to direct their action in ways

wherein there is no occasion to be ashamed. In the light of the Christian revelation, the government of an angry temper is so elementary a virtue—its exercise is so natural and necessary in the Christian spirit—that it hardly seems to require the regulation of specific rules. The difficulty here seems to be, not so much to see how anger is to be restrained, but rather, how we can be angry at all : how, even with sufficient cause, the emotions of wrath can find place in the loving spirit which is inspired and formed by the religion of Christ. Certainly, there can be no such thing as resentment, much less of revenge. If there be righteous indignation here, it must be tempered both by justice and mercy : and by mercy even more than justice, in the consciousness that to mercy more than justice we owe the condoning of our own wrongs.

It is certainly true that there is such a thing as righteous indignation in the Christian temper. The loving Saviour Himself, more than once in His human life, felt and manifested a righteous indignation. He did not look on indifferently or placidly at the profanation of His Father's house by covetous traffickers ; but was angry at the sight, and in His anger made a whip and drove out the defilers. More than once His loving eye flashed, and His

pure cheek burned with indignant aversion at the hypocrisy and selfishness of the Scribes and Pharisees. If we have His spirit, there must be in us something, at least in our measure, of His ardent devotion to the service, and of his intense thirst for the glory of God; and of necessary consequence, it will follow, that there will be in us "a shrinking from the pollution of sin and sinners; an impatience, nay, indignation, at witnessing God's honour insulted; a quickness of feeling when His name is mentioned, and a jealousy how it is mentioned; a readiness to meet obloquy, or reproach, or persecution, or forgetfulness of friend or relative, nay, a hatred (so to say), of all that is naturally dear to us, when He says, Follow Me." *

We need a truer appreciation and clearer recognition of this element in the Christian character—of its true function and purpose—than we commonly have in this generation. For want of it, the Gospel of Christ is turned into a mere gospel of gush and sentimentalism, and the Christian character is emasculated of true manliness and sapped of all effective virtue. "It needs to be said even in the Christian pulpit that there is a place, not only for love, but also for anger in human society; anger against

* Newman, Par. Ser. vol., i., p. 530.

injustice, against unrighteousness, against sin and wrong, wherever and by whomsoever manifested. Let it be tempered to the full with Christian mercy ; still without its really effective inspiration there will be no general administration of justice, no cultivation or maintenance of traits which are high and noble in the individual character."

The application in just this point should be made by each one of us emphatically to himself. In our consciousness of individual unworthiness we may well doubt if we have a right to be indignant against, much less to condemn, any wrong that we may see in others ; but there is no ground for such scruple in relation to ourselves. Here righteous indignation may have full sway, and do its utmost work. We cannot look with too intense a loathing upon the selfishness, the impurity, or the impiety, that is found in our own hearts. In this relation we may be angry with no fear that our anger may involve sin. Happy indeed will it prove with us if our anger give us no rest, and suffer us to have no thought of peace, until we are enlisted and engaged for life in a war of utter extermination against this evil ! Happy indeed if in our own experience we can realise what the Apostle meant when, in his pastoral counsel, he addressed in such terms as

these the Christians of the first generation: "For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves; yea, what indignation; yea, what fear; yea, what vehement desire; yea, what zeal; yea, what revenge. In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter."

CHAPTER VIII.

CHRISTIAN PURITY.

"Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God."—ST. MATTHEW v. 8.

THE pure in heart: are any pure? Is it possible for any of us, in this world of sinful temptations, and with carnal nature whose instinctive impulses are readily responsive to these temptations, to meet this requirement,—to be pure in word and deed, and, more than that, in the very desires and dispositions of our innermost hearts? The angels can be pure; for they have their life and being in a world whose very atmosphere is that of purity, and are purely spiritual in their own nature. Little children, even in this world, may be pure; for the carnal propensities of our nature are in them undeveloped, and they have no knowledge of the world's defilements: but, men and women, in a world like this! Can they be pure?

Not, certainly, if the purity required be that of either angels or little children. Not, if it be seclusion from outward associations of evil or inward impulses to evil. Not, if it be a separation from influences of defilement either by entire purity of nature or by the innocence of mere unconsciousness or ignorance.

This is not the purity which has the Saviour's benediction; at least, not for us. Purity undoubtedly means clearness from all manner of defilement; and purity of heart means this clearness in the feelings and desires, the likings and affections. It is not incompatible with a knowledge of evil; for knowledge is not in the heart, but in the mind. It is not inconsistent with the existence and legitimate exercise of the affections and impulses of our physical constitution; for if they be elementary in our nature, they must have been implanted by our Creator, and there can be no defilement of guilt in their proper exercise and gratification. If it be natural to hunger for food, it cannot be wrong to be hungry in the want of food, and there can be no wrong in supplying this want in lawful method and measure. If there be any other impulse which is natural, elementary in our physical constitution, and not owing to its fallen condition, that impulse has, unquestionably, its legitimate direction, and in that direction may, innocently and purely, have its exercise and find satisfaction in its appropriate object. Neither, again, is this purity inconsistent with our exposure to the influence of impure surroundings. The Son of God was, in this fallen world for thirty years, surrounded all the while by its influences and agencies of evil,

just as we are. He was brought into the closest possible external association with the author of all evil; more than that, He was subjected to his influences, heard his defiling suggestions with His ears, and even received them into the inner sphere of His mental faculties: yet He was, most certainly, pure, spotless, and undefiled. It is not, as He Himself said, that which goeth into a man which defileth him, but that which cometh out. "For, out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: these are the things which defile a man."

We must recognise the fact that we have within us, in our innermost nature, propensities which are not pure, impulses which move not under the direction of purity. We cannot have any true knowledge of ourselves without being conscious of a knowledge of sin, not only in the way of that pure cognition which even the angels may be supposed to have, and which God in His omniscience must have, but also the base, impure knowledge which has its root in corrupt affections, and its growth in a lustful experience. Because of these corrupt propensities in our nature, our hearts are open to receive the corrupt influences that are without, and suggestions of evil fall, not as

in the Saviour's case, only on the organs of sense, but are readily welcomed and entertained within. They are admitted into the life-blood to quicken its vital flowing and to stimulate the very pulsations of our hearts. Hence we must be conscious both of corrupt desires—desires which in themselves are especially foul and vile—and also of impulses and affections which may not be wrong in themselves but which become so by excess and faulty direction.

Therefore we must recognise the fact that we are fallen beings, and must understand clearly that the attainment of purity is not an attainment of nature. It is not to be sought after, for a moment, without the divine strength and sweetness which come from the indwelling and inworking of God the Holy Ghost in our hearts : which indwelling and inworking it is the purpose of every provision of the Gospel and every ministration of the Church to secure for us.

There are, then, laid out before us two possibilities of life, differing in every respect from each other, and diverging more and more to utterly different ends, between which every living person must make his choice, and in one or the other of which, according to that choice, he must work out his own personal destiny.

One is the life of our corrupt fallen nature, of

which it were a shame even to speak except in general terms. That it is natural, that there are in our innermost nature propensities which incline readily and strongly towards it, that we can secure freedom from its polluting thraldom only by a persistent resistance of these inclinations,—this constitutes the darkest and most inexplicable mystery among all the mysteries of our life in this world: but the fact is sadly certain; and the only clue to its explanation is the revealed account of the fall. It is the way of living which is broad and easy, all over this world, for all the children of Adam that are born into it. They have—nay, let us bring the fact directly home to ourselves and say we have—only to follow the lead of our natural inclinations, to let them have their way, to be in our thoughts and feelings, our tastes and affections, just as they suggest;—and nothing is more certain than that we shall find ourselves under the spell of impurity, breathing the air of pollution, and given over with every faculty of our nature to its debasing and destroying power. The process of the beguilement—from its subtle inception to the fatal end—is given in few words by an inspired Apostle: "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God, for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man.

But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed." That is the first stage: lust within us, lust, which is our own by carnal nature, looking out with wanton eyes, seeking for or readily accepting surrounding evil. "Then when lust hath so conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin when it is finished"—when it has run its course and reached its end—"bringeth forth death."

Oh, how wretched the course, and how direful the destiny, which are here summed up! What a shameful perversion of our vital capabilities! what a miserable waste and wretched ruin of life!

Thank God, it is for any one of us but an alternative. For every one there is a possibility, nay, more, there is by the terms of the covenant of divine grace an assured certainty, of a life and destiny in which the spirit of impurity has no power. "Blessed are the pure in heart." Surely, He who knoweth what is in the heart of man and needeth not that any should tell Him, pronounced in this sentence no impracticable benediction. It is possible, it must be, for every one of us to attain the blessing.

Happy indeed our lot, if, with our very birth into this fallen world, and before our consciousness of its defiling influences or of the infection of our nature, we were born again into the divine Kingdom, and

nurtured and trained, in dawning infancy and through all the years of youth when character is forming, under the constant guidance of the spirit of purity! In all the Christian generations there have been—as, thank God, we doubt not that even in this generation there are—many such favoured ones; of whom it may be almost said without presumption, that the prince of wickedness findeth nothing in them. Certainly it is true, that whatever may be the danger of a possible loss of salvation in their case, it is not on the side of impurity or from its special temptations.

This may be conceded to be the privilege of comparatively few. The many, especially of boys and men, whose life is constantly in the unclean traffic of the world, are constrained to breathe an impure atmosphere and to know much of evil—too much, by far, for their integrity, their strength, or their purity of intention and purpose. These are saved so as by fire. They must learn to be pure as they learn to be strong, by the strain and tension of a constant struggle.

But they can learn it, they can overcome, they can prevail, not, certainly, by the inherent strength of their own unaided will, or by power in their own nature, but by that pardoning and purifying and

strengthening grace of God, which has been purchased for us by the precious blood of His Incarnate Son, and which is sure to be granted in its all-sufficient and saving efficacy to every one who will humbly receive and honestly use it.

Of these two entirely different sorts and opposite ways of life, it is not difficult to see how, even here and now in this world, it is of the latter only that the promise holds good: "they shall see God."

The impure heart has no divine perceptiveness. In habitual impurity of thought and feeling, there is, in the first place, *no desire* to see God. The wishes and longings of such are all earthly, sensual, devilish; no aspiration that is heavenward, no disposition to look upward. If it could be possible for a heavenward desire to be momentarily awakened in such a heart, the foul and murky atmosphere in which it lives, moves, and has it being, would shut down upon it and utterly hide from it the light of the sun and all the glory of the skies. There is no surer road to the "eclipse of faith" than through the indulgence of impure thoughts and desires. No fact in the history of mankind is more unquestionably demonstrated, demonstrated in all experience as a moral law of cause and effect, than is this

inseparable connection of spiritual blindness with habitual impurity. Every reader of history knows that there have been, among different people, and under different forms of civilisation, periods which are marked as epochs of infidelity ; and no such period has ever failed to exhibit, as its equally unmistakable characteristic, the dark stains of prevalent licentiousness and general impurity. If it be indeed true, as many fear, that such a wave of moral corruption is threatening to engulf the present and immediately coming generation even here, if crimes of violence and lust are outbreaking, as never before, in frequency and malignity, if cleanness of conduct and expression, if integrity which is above suspicion, and honour without the possibility of taint, and purity absolutely unassailable, are becoming no longer looked for, and hardly believed in ;—it is no wonder if it be also a time when there is no longer any open vision of God, when all divine mysteries are treated as sheer riddles, and perplexities of the spiritual world openly repudiated and scouted at as but the foolishness of old superstition.

Even in an evil and adulterous generation there are still, thank God, ever found some who by His grace have been enabled to keep themselves pure, at least from the sins which grossly defile both

the body and soul, and others still who, though they have known taint, have sought steadily and successfully for purification through the atoning and inworking grace of the Divine Redeemer; and, in the experience of all such it is, most assuredly, ever found to be true that, as they advance in purity, they advance also in spiritual knowledge. The one is ever the condition of the other: cleanness of heart ever the qualification for clearness of sight. Cleanness of heart,—"sweet and innocent in childhood; strong, self-controlling and victorious in youth; established, settled, entirely won and held unassailably sure in manhood"—this it is which is not only the basis and foundation of all true character, but, which is also "the fairest and most gracious of all the fruits of the Spirit in a regenerate soul,"* and most effectively influential in restoring man to companionship with angelic natures and fitting him for the blissful presence and sight of God.

Can we doubt that this must still be true when we shall have passed away from earth into the future state? If there may be these possibilities of a more open access than here to the divine presence, if we may hope to see and know Him as we can-

* Bishop Moberly, Sermons on the Beatitudes, sermon vi.

not now, must not purity be still the indispensable qualification? Can a *sinner*—all befouled and blinded—see God? But, on the other hand, can the eye of purity fail to see Him and to find its satisfying delight in Him? It has seen Him amid all these earthly damps and vapours: seen Him in Sacraments and all holy Ordinances; in all natural manifestations, and all Providential orderings; and shall it not much more see Him where He dwelleth in perfect light, and when all the lets and hindrances of this earthly state shall have been entirely removed?

Oh, if it may be ours at last to know in very deed this blessedness,—if after all the temptations and trials, the doubts and darkness, of this mortal pilgrimage, we may come before Him in whose presence is the fulness of life and joy,—if we may awake from the dead in the pure and holy likeness of the Redeemer,—if we may lift up our eyes, redeemed, sanctified, saved, to see, and see for ever, the eternal mercy of God in Christ to all and upon all those who are made like Him,—it is worth while to have been under discipline, worth while to have borne the yoke and endured the struggle, worth while to have resisted the dev and mortified the flesh, and overcome the world!

Shall we not, one and all, with more and more earnestness, aspire after, and pray for, and discipline all our powers of body and soul in that purity of heart, that cleanness of spirit, to which, and to which alone, this blessedness is promised and assured ?

CHAPTER IX.

CHRISTIAN CONSECRATION OF THE BODY.

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God : which is your reasonable service."—ROMANS xii. 1.

LET us observe distinctly that the call upon us here is not simply to present ourselves in a general way, but to present our *bodies*, as clearly implying that our bodies as well as our souls have been regenerated in Christ, and, by virtue of His redemption, are, with all their members, made meet for the service of God.

This is a most important truth for us, and one to which our attention needs to be specially called, because it has been sadly lost sight of in modern Christianity. We are all accustomed to hear, and probably also to think of, religion as a matter simply of feeling. To be religious is very commonly supposed to mean no more than to be seriously minded, thoughtful of our duties towards God, and of a prayerful spirit and temper ; and this does certainly include a very essential requisite of religion : but the defect in it is its failure to recognise the completeness of our redemption, and our consequent obligation to a surrender of our entire selves, of our

bodies not less truly than of our souls, unto the service of Him who hath redeemed us.

To quicken within us a clear recognition of this truth, let us consider how our bodies are represented in the New Testament revelation as affected by the redeeming grace of the divine Saviour.

We must think, first, of our bodies as they are by nature, inherited from Adam and existing in this world. Nothing is more certain than the fact that, as such, they are corrupt and perishable. That they are such, and that constantly and inevitably, is one of the most undeniable, and at times the most humiliating, experiences of our life in this world. It might be accepted as a simple and natural consequence of our connection here with a system which is perishable throughout, were there not in every one of us an idea of life which is untrammelled by such imperfections, and an ever-pressing consciousness of our capabilities if we could but have the strength and endurance of that life. This consciousness breeds universal discontent, and makes life with most persons but little more than a perpetual struggle for that to which the natural strength is felt to be unequal, and the attainment of that of which the natural endurance continually comes short.

The Old Testament revelation discloses to us the origin and cause of this physical disability. It points us to an occurrence in the very beginning of human history, by which the whole system was vitiated. It tells us of the introduction of sin, as the poison through which corruption seated itself in the vitals of humanity, and in man's degeneracy thereby brought all nature into bondage. This revelation gives us the only possible explanation of the disorder which we feel and know to be in our system. Not only does it indicate the taint of the flesh, by which disease, and pain, and weakness, and at last, death, have become inevitable; but, still more plainly, does it disclose to us the origin and the working of that deeper taint of which we are conscious, and against which we all need to struggle perpetually: viz., the taint of moral corruption. This too is undeniably within us: sin reigning in our mortal bodies turns their members into instruments of unrighteousness; perverts the eyes and ears, so that they become as doors thrown open to let in whatever defileth and is impure; makes the tongue an unruly evil, a world of iniquity, full of deadly poison; turns the throat into an open sepulchre; and makes the feet swift to shed blood.

Such, then, are our mortal bodies in their natural state: they are corrupt, weak, sickly, perishable; and thus subject to death temporal; and they are sinful, vile, the seat of depraved appetite, unholy affections, and evil passions; and they are subject to death eternal.

It is evident to our reason that bodies in such a state are not meet to be offered as a sacrifice unto a pure and holy God, and that such as they—the maimed, the withered, the halt, and the blind—are not worthy to be acceptable unto Him. If then the Christian revelation comes to us with a special call, to "present" our "bodies a living sacrifice"; if it declare this sacrifice to be "holy, and acceptable unto God," and, on our part, a "reasonable service"; it would seem necessary that it should also disclose to us some special efficacy in the provisions of the Gospel to render our bodies meet for such service.

Have we not just this assuring disclosure in the revelation of the Incarnation? "The Word was made flesh." God became Incarnate. Divinity became clothed upon with humanity, that the human might be partaker of the divine. We then, who by nature were sons of Adam, inheriting Adam's fallen nature, and subject to Adam's death, by grace have

become sons of Him who is the Second Adam, receiving His immortal nature and partaking of His eternal life. For as many of us as have been baptised in Him were made thereby members of His body ; as the Apostle declares : " By one Spirit we are all baptised into one body," and that the body of Christ. He is graciously pleased to identify us with Himself and to make us partakers of the life which He hath in Himself. Hence we are declared to be the body of Christ, collectively ; and members " of His flesh and of His bones." Hence also, He is declared to be " the Head, from which all the body, by joints and bands having nourishment ministered and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God." If we are thus closely united with the Incarnate God, there must needs be to us very great and wonderful benefits from the union. Our mortal bodies must surely be quickened by His body, for He hath life in Himself and quickeneth all things. Such, is the case, the New Testament plainly assures us. In the first place, it teaches that our bodies, not simply our souls, or as some would say in modern Christendom, our hearts—but *our bodies* are members of Christ. " Know ye not," says St. Paul to the Corinthian Christians, as if it were one of the very first truths of the Gospel, " Know

ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ and temples of the Holy Ghost?" In the second place, our bodies are identified with all that Christ did, and all that He is, and even our infirmities—our bodily weaknesses and defects—are taken up into a participation in His redeeming grace, so that, as the Apostle assures us, "we fill up in our flesh that which is behind of the sufferings of Christ, for His body's sake, which is the Church." Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death, that *like as Christ* was raised up from the dead by the *glory* of the Father, *even so* we also should walk in newness of life: knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him that the body of sin might be destroyed. If *we be dead with Christ*, we believe that *we shall also live with Him:* for He who raised up Jesus from the dead *shall also quicken our mortal bodies* by His Spirit that dwelleth in us. "By His Spirit that dwelleth in us." Not in *our hearts simply*, but in *us*; in our bodies as well as our souls. "Know ye not that *your bodies* . . . are the temple of the Holy Ghost?"

Now we can see the special force and propriety of the exhortation as addressed to those who have received the Christian revelation. "I beseech you, therefore, by the mercies of God, that ye present

your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

Let us consider with all due seriousness what this means for us practically.

We know what is meant by the presenting of anything for sacrifice. We know that under the old dispensation, the people of God were required to bring the bodies of sheep and oxen and present them before the altar, that the priest might offer them in sacrifice thereon. We know that bodies so presented were wholly consecrated unto the Lord: that their former owners ceased to have any claim upon them, nor could they take them from the altar and use them for unhallowed purposes without sacrilege of the deepest dye.

Well, even so the New Testament revelation declares to us: Ye are not your own; ye are bought with a price; ye are consecrated unto God; your bodies are members of Christ who was sacrificed for you.

On this ground it is that the call is made: Present, therefore, your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God; it is your reasonable service, and if you do it not, you are guilty of sacrilege—ay, guilty of defiling the temple of God; and the terrible sentence then follows: "Whosoever

defileth the temple of God, him will God destroy." The truth which we have to remember is, that *our bodies have been consecrated*, set apart unto the service of Him who cannot look on sin with the least degree of allowance; and in that consecration we were made in very deed temples of His pure Spirit.

The practical consequence is, that we keep them as so consecrated, that we defile them not, unhallow them not; but that we sanctify the Lord God in our hearts, and glorify Him in our bodies and in our spirits which are God's; that we let not sin reign in our mortal bodies, that we should obey it in the lusts thereof, neither yield our members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, but yield ourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead, and our members as instruments of righteousness unto God.

This consecration must mean more than that we are to keep ourselves from indulgence in gross sins of the flesh, such as "adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings and such like." These we know to be "the works of the flesh," and cannot be ignorant that "they who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Even

heathen morality might go thus far, and many heathens there have been, and no doubt are now, free from such gross vices; yet their bodies are not members of Christ, nor are they temples of the Holy Ghost.

Our bodies are. Therefore, not morality only, but, holiness—active, living holiness, holiness unto the Lord in both body and soul—is our reasonable service and bounden duty. The call is: Be ye holy, as God is holy: be ye separate from sinners, and undefiled from the great offence: be in very deed, as ye are in name, "a peculiar people," "in the world, but not of the world," and therefore "not conformed to the world," not conformed to its frivolities, its pomps and vanities; but so separate, so peculiar, so holy and zealous in all good works, that ye may be "as a city set on a hill which cannot be hid," and as lights shedding all around you, wherever ye may be, a holy, heavenly influence seen and felt of all. Be as epistles, "living epistles," so that all may see and read that ye are a holy people unto the Lord, His elect, children of His Beloved, joined as living members with their living head to His Incarnate, Immaculate Son. To sum up all in one inspired sentence—inspired do we say? —ay, in the language of Him who is the Fountain

of all inspiration, the Light and the Life of the world, Him whose members our bodies are: "*Be ye perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.*" Does this seem like a hard saying? Let us remember it is the saying of Him whose servants we profess to be, and who will in the last day be our Judge. It is *the rule* which He has set before us and commanded us to walk by. If we be His, this, and nothing short of it, must be the rule by which we walk, the standard at which we aim: to be holy, as He is holy, perfect, as God in heaven is perfect; perfect in our bodies as well as in our souls, perfect in all things, whether we eat, or drink, or whatsoever we do, doing all to the glory of God.

True, indeed, the higher our aim, the more humbling will be our consciousness of continually coming short of it. This side of eternity we may never reach it. When we have done all, we shall still be but unprofitable, miserably unprofitable, servants; and so we have no righteousness of our own to trust in, no merit to plead, as a ground of salvation. The Cross of Christ must, after all we have done or may do, be our only plea; His meritorious grace our only ground of hope: but still, it is infallibly certain that unless *we aim* to be perfect; unless we remember that we are not

our own, but bought with a price; unless we realise that our bodies are temples of the Holy Ghost; unless we glorify God in our bodies and our spirits, which are God's; unless we present, here and now and all through life, our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, He will not recognise us at the last day as His, nor receive us as the children of His kingdom.

God forbid, that any word of ours should discourage any one who is honestly struggling in conscious weakness against the corruption of nature! but, can we have before us this high standard, as that which the Word of God alone authorises, for the Christian life, without thought of the danger, not less than of the utter inconsistency, of those who have been baptised into Christ's Body, but who are, nevertheless, living carelessly, impenitently, thoughtlessly, godlessly, as the children of this world? In a vision of one of the old Prophets, there was a revelation of the abominations which were secretly practised in the house of God, and by which even the very inner court of the sanctuary was defiled. The Prophet was bidden to dig in the wall, and to enter the temple by a secret door that he should find. He tells us that, when he went in and saw, "Behold, every form of creeping

things, and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel, portrayed upon the wall round about. Then said He"—the Lord God —"unto me: Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chambers of his imagery? For they say, The Lord seeth us not; the Lord hath forsaken the earth." Has this vision no application now? Has it no warning for those who have once been made "members of Christ," "temples of the Holy Ghost," but who are now, and that confessedly and consciously, walking after the lusts of the flesh: their bodies unhallowed, desecrated, defiled; the holy altar overthrown, and the altar of idols and of devils set up in its place? Is there no handwriting on those desecrated walls,—"Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin"? Is there no voice that speaks the sentence from that polluted altar—"He that defileth the temple of God, him shall God destroy"?

Let no one of us be unmindful of the possible application to himself.

Let no one of us be insensible of the mercies of God of which we, in the Christian dispensation, have been the recipients; nor fail, by a sense of those mercies, to resolve, with an earnestness and

persistence of resolution beyond any heretofore, that our bodies shall be presented, in very deed and by daily sacrifice, unto Him who hath washed and redeemed us by His blood that we might be holy and acceptable in His sight.

CHAPTER X.

CHRISTIAN PROFESSION AND USE OF WEALTH.

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."—ST. MATTHEW vi. 19—21.

THERE can be no question that the Sermon on the Mount is a fundamental document in the Christian revelation. Delivered, as it was, in the very beginning of our Lord's ministry, it was clearly intended by Him to be understood as a summary proclamation of the practical principles of His religion in contradistinction to the principles of other religious systems, and, particularly, those prevailing in that age. . The remark of the multitude at the time, that He taught them " not as the scribes," is true therefore in a deeper sense than they probably meant or thought of. The teaching of Christ herein is "not as the scribes," not only in that it was charged with authority and power in the utterance which no mere human scribe is capable of, but also in that its fundamental principles are, in all cases, far deeper and truer than the principles which the Jewish teachers inculcated, and, in some, radically subversive of them.

In such a fundamental proclamation, it is certainly

remarkable, that a considerable section is devoted to the principles and motives which should govern men in their daily labour for subsistence and for wealth in this world. We should be at a loss to account for the introduction of such a topic in such a document, were it not in the subsequent teachings of the New Testament made abundantly clear that the religion of Christ does include, among its distinctive, fundamental, practical principles, one relating directly both to common labour and business of the world and intended to have a very decided influence upon its disciples, inasmuch as it touches the very spring of all their conduct in the prosecution of such business.

What this principle is, to what extent and under what circumstances it is applicable to us, and what are the obligations which it imposes upon us—are questions which are certainly entitled to the most thoughtful and conscientious consideration of every Christian man.

The opinion which is common, and may be almost said to be universal, in our current modern Christianity, is that it amounts to no more than this: viz., that "professing" Christians should be careful not to become too exclusively absorbed in the pursuit, or too covetously possessed with a desire for

the accumulation, of worldly wealth ; that they are not to set their hearts so much on it as to prefer it to heavenly riches ; that they must be honest and upright, pursuing it always by fair means and securing it by equitable methods, never suffering their eagerness for it to lead them into a violation either of the divine commandments or the laws of the land. With these restrictions, it is commonly thought that there is nothing in the religion of Christ that is incompatible with the most determined and untiring pursuit of wealth. Indeed, it is generally taken for granted, that such pursuit is a proper exercise of certain important Christian virtues,—as industry, diligence in one's calling, and faithfulness to one's family and other dependants.

It would seem, however, hardly possible for any one to read thoughtfully such passages as those under consideration, without having at least a suspicion that they must mean more than this. For if this were all their import, it is indeed a wonder that our Lord should have introduced the subject into the Sermon on the Mount, or that it should have been so often referred to in the subsequent teachings both of Himself and His inspired Apostles. What was there, on this supposition, in any sense *peculiar* in His requirements? What addition did He make to

the stock of ethical knowledge which had previously existed either among the Jews or even the heathens? Was it ever seriously maintained by anybody that it can be right to pursue the things of this life *immoderately*, with a zeal and an eagerness disproportioned to their real value, to the neglect of higher interest, or in disregard of the principles of justice and honesty? Many *have done* this, it is true: many more than are themselves aware. But who would think of defending it? Who would not repudiate the imputation of it, if charged upon himself? There is no need of revelation to teach men this. It is a principle so plain and obvious, that no one who listens to the voice of reason can fail to perceive and acknowledge it. It might well be asked then, and that without impiety, If Christ inculcated no more than this, what did He more than others? what more than the scribes and Pharisees, whose systems He was here professedly holding up as defective? Did they teach that it is justifiable to set the heart exclusively on worldly goods? or to love them so much as, for the sake of them and in their pursuit, to be dishonest, or in any other respect to disregard the laws of God and of society? Certainly not. There was no such defect in their ethical system. It would seem,

therefore, that there must be some deeper meaning than the current opinion recognises in these precepts of the Christian revelation.

Again, without admitting a deeper meaning we do not see how it is possible to account for the New Testament language. It has no terms of qualification. It does not speak of degrees, but of fundamental principles. It does not say: "Set not your affections *too much* on earthly things," but, very unqualifiedly: "Set your affections on things above, not on things on earth." Christ does not warn His disciples against serving Mammon so absorbingly as to forget that there is some sort of obligation due to God; but His plain warning is that Mammon cannot be served at all without entire opposition to divine allegiance. He does not advise them against a too exclusive or too slavish devotion of life to the laying up of treasures upon earth; but His unqualified direction is: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, . . . let your treasure be in heaven: for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." The Apostle does not write: "Do not love the world too much or too exclusively": but, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world: if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." Surely, such pre-

cepts as these must not be frittered away. They are deeper and truer than the teaching of any heathen philosopher or Jewish scribe. They do—they must—call every one who accepts and conforms to them to a far higher life, a life of infinitely loftier aspirations and more enduring purposes, than is commonly recognised or aimed at in our modern Christianity.

The key to their real import is, doubtless, to be found in the fact that the Christian revelation has brought Life and Immortality to light. Christ, first of all and alone, disclosed the true relation of the life that now is, to the life which is to come. He taught that this world, since the Fall, is designed for no other purpose than for probation ground; that its life is in no sense man's true life, but only a temporary tenancy, in which he is, under the condition of redemption, a "steward" of God; not having, nor by any possibility capable of having, anything as his own, but occupying his place and estate, whatever it may be, solely at God's will, and for the single purpose of working out the divinely ordained conditions of salvation unto the life everlasting.

It is in the light of this revelation that the precepts under consideration have been given. Life and Immortality are brought to light. Heaven is revealed

as the true home—the real destination and eternal abode—of the regenerated family of man. Obviously, then, it is in the light of this revelation, and in regard to this great fact, that these practical precepts are to be considered and construed.

So considered, they can be understood as tantamount to nothing less than this: Strive to secure for yourselves that Life and Immortality. Make the true use of your time and talents in this world. Do not make the things of earth objects of your pursuit, nor set your affections on them, as if they could be in any true sense or for any considerable length of time your own. They are only lent to you: only placed in your hands on trust, for the accomplishment of God's purposes here, and your eternal happiness hereafter. You are citizens of heaven, not of earth; destined for eternity, not for time; sons and heirs of God, not of man. Live, then, as such. Let your conversation (citizenship) be in heaven. Set your affections on things above, not on things on earth. Walk by faith, not by sight.

If we accept this as the general import of these passages, their pertinency as Christian precepts is obvious, inasmuch as they express but the legitimate practical consequence of that revelation of the life eternal which is a special characteristic of the

Christian dispensation. Faith in this revelation is made, then, clearly a most practical principle. It is, in very truth, the substance of the things hoped for and the evidence of the things not seen. To be actuated by it is something much more real, much more effective in relation to the whole business of life, than is implied in the shallow phraseology of a faithless age when men talk about making "a profession of religion." A profession, indeed! Nay, the very warp and woof of life, with its whole colour and texture, are included in the requirement: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal: for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

It may be asked, is it a *practicable* thing to bring these principles into the real life of this world? Would not the attempt, in so far as it could be successful, result in making men mere visionaries and fanatics, totally unfitting them for the accomplishment of the necessary business, or the discharge of the actual responsibilities of life? Does not a successful prosecution of any kind of business im-

peratively demand devotion to it? Is it not, therefore, absolutely necessary that men should mind earthly things, mind them very closely, consider them very carefully, know their exact value, and seize upon every opportunity to put them to the most profitable investments? How then could the business of the world be carried on, if it came to be generally understood that Christianity requires a real (and not merely technical, or professional) living for, and pursuit of things unseen and eternal?

In reply to which, we have to say, that we believe it is altogether practicable. We see no such difficulty as is there apprehended in a life of real faith. On the contrary, we claim that the more completely our whole life, with its entire conduct, is based on the great fact that our treasure is in heaven, the truer will be our estimate, and the better our use, of all the treasures of earth. Let a man begin life with a steadfast determination not to set his heart on any earthly thing,—that is, not to place any such thing before him as the object, or final end, of living,—but, to fix his eye on heaven, make that his object, and start in pursuit of it, regarding his calling in life as the road which leads to it, and all the relations of life as subservient to it: what will be the practical effect? It is clear,

in the first place, that, let his lot be what it may, he will do his duty in it. Realising his responsibilities to God, and aiming ever to promote His glory, he must prove to be a faithful steward in discharging all his obligations in all the relations of life. So, because success in life is the ordinary consequence of diligence and fidelity in the discharge of its duties, he will be most likely to succeed even in this world, and really to obtain its goods, at least sufficiently for his true welfare, without deeming the attainment any test or measure of the life's success.

Let no one, then, plead their impracticability, as reason for explaining away, or for neglecting to act upon, these precepts of Christ. Try them first, let them be thoroughly tested by practical living, and all ground for this plea will vanish.

It may however, we admit, be reasonably questioned whether the general adoption of these principles would not be somewhat revolutionary in our modern Christendom : whether it would not lead necessarily to such radical changes as would affect the whole social economy and give rise to entirely new social problems. For instance, even if it be granted that they are not incompatible with the measure of success in life which is an ordinary consequence of industry and faithfulness in one's

calling, are they, or can they be, consistent with the pursuit, or even the continual possession, of immense wealth? Would it be possible for one to accumulate very largely while living and doing business on these principles? Or, in case of inherited wealth, would one dare to hold it? Would it not be the very first duty, in such case, for the man to sell that which he had, and give to the poor? Would not society be reduced, consequently, to a dead level, in which there would be no stimulus for energetic ability, no reward for enterprise, but in which idleness and worthlessness would thrive and fatten?

Two or three suggestions may throw light on these points, and help us to see wherein and to what extent the principles under consideration may and should be adopted in our lives and business.

On the supposition, then, of the general adoption of these principles—that is, the realisation of the true ideal of the Christian social state—it is clear, in the first place, that there would be no place for idleness or worthlessness, because it would be the generally accepted rule that every person should do his duty in the station of life to which it had pleased God to call him.

Then, secondly, since the conditions of success in life would consist then, as now, partly in personal

capabilities and partly in advantages of Providential allotment, and since these conditions would be then, as now, variously distributed, it is plain that the degrees of success, which individuals in the general competition severally attain to, would not be much, if any, less various than they are now. So that there need be no fear of reducing society to a dead level; though if it should happen that less importance should be attached to distinctions that are merely artificial and conventional, and that more of helpful and kindly sympathy should be extended to the unsuccessful strugglers, it is safe to say that society would suffer no loss.

In the case of inherited wealth, the very inheritance involves obligations which the principles under consideration would not require, nor allow, the inheritors to throw off. These obligations can, ordinarily, be most effectively met, not by an indiscriminate scattering of the inheritance, nor even by hasty, though discriminating, distribution of it among the needy; but, rather, by a conscientious holding of the trust, and by such an administration and use of it as would meet the conditions of a faithful stewardship. How these conditions could be met by hoarding wealth, or by using it solely or chiefly for personal gratification or

aggrandisement, we confess ourselves unable to see.

The conclusion of the whole matter seems clearly to be this: that it is the unquestionable obligation of every one of us to understand and realise that we are creatures of God, and are living here in His world; that we have, or can have, nothing that is really our own, or anything held by us on any other terms than that of a temporal and conditional tenancy; and, therefore, whether we hold little or much, that we are to account ourselves simply His stewards; if it be little, stewards in the use of that little, to learn and grow in the graces of patience, contentment, and loving trust; if much, stewards still with correspondingly larger responsibilities, to help others who are struggling in the lack of our endowed ability or our Providential advantages, and to further, in all the ways and through all the relations which are legitimately open to our benefactions, the divine purposes of mercy and love.

CHAPTER XI.

CHRISTIAN HONESTY.

"Provide things honest in the sight of all men."—ROMANS xii. 17.

WE suppose that every one on hearing this precept would say that it is very plain, easy to be understood, and incumbent upon every person for practical application. We suppose that most persons would not only say this, but also claim that they have understood and practised it, as their uniform rule of life from youth up, and would feel grossly insulted if the truth of the claim should be doubted by another. The old line—

"An honest man's the noblest work of God,"

is often quoted with complacent satisfaction, and many who are not over-sensitive on other points, are exceedingly tenacious of their reputation in this.

It may be that a careful consideration of this precept will show it to contain a deeper and more comprehensive meaning than appears on the surface.

There is in it, obviously, an exhortation to a duty: *Provide*; and a rule as to the manner in

which this duty is to be performed: "Provide *things honest* in the sight of all men."

Let us give our first consideration to the duty: PROVIDE.

It is plain enough that the world in which our present life is cast abounds in all things needful for its sustenance; but it is equally plain that these things are not the property of any one till he has earned a title to them. The law of life, which is universal, for all alike, is: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground." This means that all sustenance must come to us as the product of labour; that without labour, whether of the hand or brain, no one can have his portion in the goods of this life.

On the ground of imperative duty, therefore, as well as from regard for personal welfare, every one living is bound to provide for his sustenance by a systematically industrious use of his faculties and opportunities. This does not mean that there is an obligation to that labour which toils to get, merely for the sake of getting, which grasps eagerly after large possessions, seeking to join house to house and field to field; for this is plainly stigmatised in Holy Scripture as "covetousness, which is idolatry." But it does mean that no one has a

right to remain idle, neglecting to employ his faculties and burying talents which have been intrusted to him for use; for, in such idleness there is guilt, both of ingratitude toward God and of dishonesty toward men: of ingratitude toward God in neglecting the proper use of His gifts, and of dishonesty toward men in subsisting on others' earnings. Since every one living must be provided with things needful to sustain life, it is evident that just in proportion as any one fails to provide for himself, he must be provided for by some one else; and so in every case of negligent inefficiency there is an unequal distribution of burdens, one being pressed down beneath a double load because another is empty-handed.

It is further to be considered that, in the economy of life as it has been ordained by our Heavenly Father, there is an unequal distribution of responsibilities in this respect. "He hath set the solitary in families." In the family relations, the heads are not only empowered with authority over the subordinate members, but also charged with the responsibility of providing for them the necessaries of life. This is a duty, the obligation to which is so ingrained in the very constitution of human nature and society, that its neglect is

declared by St. Paul to be a crime of more heinous guilt, because, we suppose, it is more unnatural, than even infidelity. He says: "If any man provide not for *his own*," that is, his own kin who are unable to support themselves, "and especially those of his own house," that is, those who compose his family, as wife, children, servants, "he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel."

Thus much, then, is clearly involved in the obligation which is inculcated in the apostolic precept to *provide*. It is, simply, a fundamental law of life in this world, and to fulfil it is, simply, to meet the first condition of honest living. It means that work, regular daily work, work which is to be done steadily and industriously, is appointed for every one of us; in the doing of which we are, no matter what our station, clearly and strangely authorised and required to consider ourselves as God's workmen. So the product of our work is to be accounted as His wages. It is the earning of living for ourselves, and for those whom He hath made, for the time being, dependent upon us. There is no better summary of it than that of the Church Catechism, wherein every one of us trained by the Church has been instructed from childhood to say, it is my duty to "learn and labour truly to get mine own living, and to do my

duty in that state of life unto which it shall please God to call me."

But something beyond this is enjoined in the Apostolic precept. It recognises not only the fundamental duty, but also directs how the duty is to be performed. It tells us not only to provide, but to provide *things honest* in the sight of all men. The question now is: how much is implied in this?

First, of course, that our calling is to be an honest one, and our daily work that which we ought to do: something which makes a just and innocent contribution to the sum of life's use and enjoyment. This is too obvious to need insisting on: but if there should possibly be any one, and especially a young man, who is inclined to take up for his practical adoption that trifling saying: "the world owed me a living," let him understand that the world owes no man a living, except that which he honestly earns.

The question—How much is implied in the obligation to earn an honest living? has, however, a deeper and further reaching significance for those who, as heads of families, are constituted providers for natural dependents, as well as for themselves.

The answer to the question in general terms would be, that it means the obligation to provide

for such dependants, so far as is within the scope of his ability, all things which are necessary for their best welfare.

Yea, more specifically, it must mean, in the first place, that whatever is needful to sustain and promote bodily health and strength is to be provided. Food, sufficient and of a wholesome quality, clothing adapted to the changing seasons, and a home for shelter, security and rest,—these are *the necessaries* of life. They *must* be provided ; and, since children are incapable of providing them for themselves, it is made the clear duty of the parental head to provide for them. The parent who should wilfully refuse or neglect to make such provision not only violates his obligation before God, but would justly be abhorred as a monster by the common consent of mankind.

When the obligation has been, in this degree and to this extent, fairly and fully met, and every reasonable bodily want is cared for, will any one contend that the obligation has been entirely discharged ?

It would be, unquestionably, if children were nothing more than material bodies. Then it would be sufficient to feed and clothe them, as cattle are fed and sheltered from the weather. But who does

not indignantly reject such a thought? Who does not say: "Our children are not mere material bodies; they are *intellectual* and *spiritual* beings; they are endowed by the Creator with mental faculties and gifted with immortal souls; ay, even more true to say, themselves are souls, which will live for ever, and of which the mortal body is merely the earthly tabernacle! In saying it, who can help seeing and feeling that the obligation to provide is indeed a very high obligation? If those, who have been made by the Almighty Father dependent on us, are intellectual and spiritual beings, then is it not quite certain that our obligation involves the duty of providing for them intellectual and spiritual sustenance? They are endowed with mental faculties: they can be taught, they can be trained; and upon this teaching and training will, ordinarily, depend their future standing in life. There is much for them to learn; much that is necessary to qualify them for the common duties of life; much more that is calculated to further their happiness and give them useful, respectable, and honourable stations among men. This teaching must be provided for them, and without controversy, the parent is to provide it, according to his ability. Ay, and if need be, he is to make great sacrifices in order to

provide it. What would be thought of that father or mother, who, so long as they had a crust of bread, would turn their starving children out upon the mercy of the weather and the world? But, are parents less culpable, who, by their own wilful neglect, will suffer their children to grow up as if they were in the order of being no higher than mere animals; with their mental nature starving for the knowledge which is absolutely necessary for its sustenance and for their usefulness and happiness in the world?

There can be but one answer to such a question. Let us consider further. When the bodily wants are supplied and the mental faculties put under cultivation, is the duty of making provision, even then, completely and honestly discharged? It would be, if the physical and the mental were all that is in human nature: but this is not true; there are still other and higher faculties. We are *spiritual*, as well as physical and mental, beings. We are endowed with *souls*, which are immortal, and whose existence must be eternal for either bliss or woe. Shall this part of our nature be neglected? Shall we pamper the body and fill the mind, but yet leave the soul, the immortal spirit, for which the Redeemer died, and which is most truly ourself, to perish eternally for

want of the Bread of Life? Is not the soul worth infinitely more than the body? Do not the interests of eternity immeasurably transcend the interests of time? Shall that, then, which is comparatively of little importance, be allowed to swallow up that which is all-important?

Surely, the case here too is clear; and it must be admitted that he only fulfils the obligation, which is enjoined in the Apostolic precept, who makes provision, and that honestly, for the soul as well as for the body and the mind.

Is it to be inferred, that the Bread of Spiritual Life is to be valued at a price, and paid for according to one's estimation of its worth? Is it implied that the gift of God is, in any sense, purchasable with money?

Most assuredly not; no more than that the honest payment of a teacher, whether directly or by participation in some system of common provision, is to be understood as implying that *the worth of the knowledge* has been estimated and that the teacher's remuneration is its price. Very low notions indeed of the worth of knowledge must one have, to imagine this. Certainly, there is no reflecting parent who does not feel that knowledge is above all price: that not all the

wealth of Crœsus can pay an equivalent for it; therefore, that what he can do and what he is bound to do is, simply, to contribute his equitable, honest proportion toward the support of those whose lives are devoted to the imparting of it.

Equally so, and in a much higher sense, that wisdom which is heavenly, that knowledge which renders the immortal soul wise unto salvation, is above all price. It is of more value than treasures of silver and gold; of more worth than rubies. But it is appointed of God to be transmitted through the successive generations and among all nations of the world by human teaching: those, who are called to this office by the divine Spirit and authorised by the divine commission, are bound to devote to it all their time and talents. It follows that they are to be supported honestly in life as others; and "the Lord hath ordained that they who preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel." So then, the obligation of their support is thrown, ordinarily, by divine appointment, on those who receive the ministrations. And so, every one who has a soul, or who has any creatures with souls dependent on him, is bound by the obligations of Christian honesty to give his equitable proportion toward their support. Thus, natural

duty is taken up into higher service, and the precept even of natural religion has its rightful place in the New Testament Scriptures, and finds its legitimate application in the Christian life: "*Provide things honest in the sight of all men.*"

It must be added, however, that, as the Christian redemption is a divine provision for a world that had fallen from the knowledge of God, there is in it the clearest possible recognition of the fact that, in every generation and family of mankind, there is sure to be a general indifference to the need or worth of its provisions; that there will always be many who cannot provide adequately, and very many more who will not provide honestly, for the wants of the spiritual nature; and, hence, that they must either be left to starve spiritually or else be provided for by others. In this case and relation, they are objects of Christian charity. It need scarcely be said that it is incumbent on every Christian man or woman to whom God hath given ability, to exercise this charity zealously and gladly according to the measure of that ability. But the point here made is, that, until such providing does thus go beyond ourselves and our natural dependants, it is not charity, but, simply, Christian honesty.

Such then we take to be the conditions of honest providing by the Christian rule. It has respect to all the wants of our nature,—physical, mental, and spiritual,—and demands that for all alike, whatsoever is requisite to promote well-being shall be, so far as by our faithful and diligent efforts it can be, honestly obtained: all alike being dependent on such effort for sustenance, and requiring alike a thorough conformity to the principles of honesty in securing it.

There is need, in these days and in this country especially, that the principle of Christian honesty in all its bearings and relations should be clearly asserted. There is no practical subject in respect to which there is a more widespread and pernicious prevalence of loose and erroneous notions. It is admitted on all hands that the wants of the body should be provided for; and that, to work hard, day after day, for this, and even to practise self-sacrifice, for the sake of keeping one's family from suffering under these wants, is nothing more than common honesty. The wants of the higher, mental nature are also appreciated; though, it must be confessed, with less earnestness: while those of the highest, the true, spiritual nature, can hardly be said to be, in a proper sense, appreciated at all.

See how it works. Here is a man, the head of a family, who receives from his business, or other source, a sufficient current income for a reasonable supply for all his personal and family needs. He claims to be an honest man, and means to provide honestly all that his family requires for its comfort and happiness. It seems clear that a conformity to the principles of Christian honesty as enjoined by the Apostle, would require him to give due consideration to the claims of the body, the mind, and the soul ; and, in distributing his expenditures, to set apart for each of these its equitable proportion : but how is it in fact? Do we not all know that there are thousands upon thousands, with such incomes, who never think of the soul, and scarcely of the mind, but give the whole to the poor, corruptible body, and even then, from their exaggerated estimation of its needs, find it very difficult to pay their debts ? A better sort attach considerable importance to education, and to secure it will not grudge a liberal proportion of their estimated expenditures. Some also take thought for the soul. But, how common the notion that this is a sort of charity, and that whatever is appropriated for its instruction and edification is purely voluntary, and therefore the measure, not of their honesty, but

of their generosity! So, whether the income be moderate or large, the physical, or the physical and mental, wants absorb all but a mere pittance; and that pittance, whether given or withheld, is put entirely out of the scale when the man's honesty or dishonesty is weighed. If given, it is an instance of his liberality; if withheld, his reputation as an honest provider for himself and his family is not impeached!

We might speak of the ruinous issues of such a standard. The truth is that the interests, not only of religion, but of all that make this life worth living, are imperilled by it; and nothing but the unqualified position that men have no soul, and that their children are likewise creatures without souls, can justify the standard of estimation, as to the obligations of simple honesty, in this respect, which now commonly obtains.

Without enlarging on this thought, we urge, in closing, for an earnest consideration of the subject in its bearing on each one's personal accountability. If the Apostle's precept be taken, as it should, into our own personal standard of honest living, we shall assuredly count it as right and requisite that we should work systematically, work persistently, work in the right use of the right means, for the

sustenance and welfare of that part of our nature which is spiritual and immortal, as for that which belongs only to the lower order which is earthly and perishable, and our life then will be ordered in all its relations, in harmony with the Christian ideal, as it is expressed in one of the grandest of the old Collects : "that being ready both in body and soul," we "may cheerfully accomplish those things which God," your Maker and Almighty Father, "would have done : through Christ, His Son, our Lord."

CHAPTER XII.

CHRISTIAN GIVING: FALSE AND TRUE.

"And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury : and many that were rich cast in much. And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. And He called unto Him His disciples, and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast more in than all they which have cast into the treasury : For all they did cast in of their abundance ; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living."—ST. MARK xii. 41—44.

THE treasury, over against which our Lord sat on this occasion, was, undoubtedly, the great money-chest of the Temple, which stood on the right side of the entrance, and into which the offerings of the people were cast, chiefly for the purpose of keeping the Temple and its furniture in repair; and it is certainly calculated to awaken melancholy reflections when we remember the precise point of the Jewish history at which the scene here described was occurring. The doom of that magnificent temple and of the city in which it stood had already been pronounced. The ministry of the Son of God, through which its destruction might have been averted and it continued for all time to be "the joy and praise of the whole earth," had been rejected; the final and irreversible conclusion respecting it had been given in the sentence: "There shall not be left in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation." Not many hours thereafter the vail of its holy of holies

was rent in twain, in the hour of darkness that fell upon the final consummation of the Redeemer's rejection, in His subjection to shame, torture, and death on the cross : and fewer were the years that intervened before the sentence of its destruction was fulfilled, and it was abandoned to the utter desolation in which it has ever since remained. Yet we see here the very people, whose unfaithfulness to the conditions of their election had incurred the judicial visitation of God's wrath, and was then about to bring its fulfilment in the utter destruction of the Temple, rendering still their contributions to keep up the repairs of this Temple and to carry on its increasingly magnificent adornments ; and it would seem from the narrative that they did this *liberally*. It is not probable that our Lord was sitting very long over against the treasury, yet the Evangelist tells us that He saw "many of the rich cast in much."

It is very observable, that none of these, however munificent their offerings, elicited from Him any remark. It was not until "a certain poor widow" was seen approaching with her offering, not till, "of her penury," she had "cast in two mites which make a farthing," that He was moved to utter any special commendation : then He was so

moved. He "called His disciples" to Him, that they might not lose the instructive lesson, and, pointing to that poor widow, declared to them that, in His estimation, "she had cast in *more* than *all they* which had cast into the treasury, for while they had cast in of their abundance, she, of her want, had cast in all that she had, even all her living."

When we bear in mind that He who said this is to be our final Judge, and that, on precisely the same principles as those which prompted that utterance, will the final judgment be conducted, and all that we may give or do be estimated, it certainly becomes a matter of vital personal interest for us to understand precisely what He meant when He declared that the poor widow had cast in *more than all the others.*

It is obvious, at once, that she had cast in more *in proportion to her ability.* However much the rich had cast in, there had been no occasion for any considerable self-denial in their offerings ; nor is it probable that, in other cases, offerings had been made at the sacrifice of any of the real necessaries of life : but, in her case, this was manifestly the truth. The two mites were not the little that *she could spare* from her daily earning after making full provision for the morrow's need, but it is expressly

said to have been an offering that came from her stinted living, and that could have been made only as the fruit, not simply of her toil, but also "*of her want.*" All that is too obvious to have probably elicited any remark from the Saviour ; or, at least, it is not to be supposed that His meaning could have been restricted to the mere expression of this very obvious fact.

He meant, no doubt, to be understood as declaring that, in a real, true sense, she had cast in *absolutely* more than all the rest ; that, in His estimation, her offering had a higher intrinsic value than theirs. To understand this, we have only to remember that His estimation was determined by the divine, not by the human standard ; and nothing is more certain, more clear from both Scripture and reason, than the truth that God's estimation of magnitude and quantity is essentially different from ours. We, in our littleness, can estimate things only as we see them. So we reckon some things as great and others small, the reckoning being always restricted to "the measure of a man." But to an Infinite Being, nothing can be really great but Himself. A world is to Him but an atom ; and an atom, being equally the product of His creative power, may be esteemed not less than a world.

The same principle holds in relation to the estimate of time—as to its duration or extension—as is clearly implied in the inspired assertion, that "one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."

Precisely the same principle must hold good with respect to the estimation of value. As God is the Sovereign Creator of all things, it is, unquestionably, as easy for Him to create gold as dust; and therefore there is no reason to suppose that in His estimation there can be any more intrinsic value in gold than in dust. It follows, then, that if in His infinite graciousness He permits men on the earth to make offerings unto Him and accepts these offerings, He only gives us opportunity in this way to make the acknowledgment of David: "All things come of Thee, and of Thine own have we given Thee." The silver and the gold are all His, and the very dust of the earth is equally His. He cannot be enriched by our offering of the one, any more than of the other. If the offering have nothing in it but its commercial value, though it amount by the commercial standard even to millions, it is counted as nothing in His judgment.

There is one thing, and only one thing, that can render our offerings valuable in His sight. We are

creatures of such sort, being endowed with reason, conscience, and will, that we are capable of being put on probation to determine whether we will have the Lord for our God or not. We are so constituted in this world that we can render the homage—and God, our heavenly Father, hath most plainly assured us that He appreciates, that He desires, and highly esteems, ay, that He delights in, our willing and loving homage—of devotion to Him. The Lord's delight is in them that love Him, and to do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice. Therefore, it follows that in just the degree that any offering is the expression, and so the measure, of devotion to God—of a loving interest in His service,—in just that degree must be its *value* in the sight of God. Whether large or small in human sight, it is large or small with Him only as it is more or less a true expression of a devoted, loving heart.

With this principle in mind, let us take our stand in imagination with the disciples, by the side of Jesus, and note the different classes who brought their offerings to the treasury of the Temple.

1. In the first place, then, among the "many rich men" who, as the Evangelist expressly tells us, "cast in much," it is far from improbable that

there were some who thus cast in from no higher motive than *sheer worldly pride.*

We can imagine such an one: honourable in his birth, his acquirements, his wealth, his foremost position among the citizens of Jerusalem, and the unquestionable integrity of his character. We need not imagine him to be haughty, or supercilious, or over-exacting; but, quite the contrary, let him be all that in social life a man of such position ought to be. So, as he approaches the treasury, let the deference with which he is received—the ready giving way of the crowd that he may have no annoyance or hindrance, the respectful salutation of the better sort, the obsequiousness of the attendant officials—let it all be real, and, as men commonly speak, well deserved. He is, every inch, a citizen of glorious Jerusalem: proud, and justly proud, of it and of his position and rank in it. He is identified with all its magnificence, in all its exclusiveness; and is entirely willing—nay, more than willing, in this regard also, proud—to be among the largest contributors to maintain this magnificence and to carry it forward. The offering of such an one must have been costly, and we may be sure that it received due consideration from the people and the priests. We do no read, however, that it

received any special commendation from Jesus. We know that, if esteemed by Him at all, it was held in lower value than the widow's farthing.

Yet, let us observe, it would certainly be a very undiscriminating mistake to conclude, that in either his position, his reputation, his wealth or his due regard for the maintenance of noble rank by noble munificence, and much less, that in his high-minded recognition of a noble citizen's responsibility, lay the reason for the Lord's withholding of His approbation. One may, unquestionably, have and exercise all these as endowments, in trust for larger consecration to God's service, and so for the wider manifestations of the glory of divine grace. But the defect in the case here imagined, was that the offering was the fruit of no such consecration, the product of no loving devotion to God, but simply and solely of worldly pride. As such, however respectable among men and however useful in apparent results, it could have no value in the sight of Him who delighteth only in the homage of loving hearts.

2. Akin to this sort of offerers were those, of whom we may be sure there must have been some that came under our Lord's observation, who came to the treasury, and cast in *from mere pharisaism.*

With our Lord's own description of one such in the temple-worship, it is very easy to identify the characteristic marks of this class in their offerings: the self-righteous scrupulosity in determining the amount and in observing all the recognised proprieties of the time and place, the self-complacency in rendering and the self-satisfaction in reflecting upon the duty. It is equally easy to see how little there could have been in such an offering to receive the approbation of Jesus.

Here again, to guard against possible and not very uncommon mistake, it may be well to discriminate, by recollecting that when Jesus Himself was, on another occasion, reproving the Pharisees, for omitting judgment, justice, and truth, while they were very scrupulous in paying tithes of mint, anise, and cummin, He did not condemn their scrupulousness in this latter regard, but simply said: "These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone." So, if He accepted not their offerings, it was not because of their high regard for the ceremonials of religion, not because of their scrupulous observance of all the prescribed or recognised proprieties of these ceremonials, but simply because *the motives* which were really the root of all their observances were other than those which constitute the animating spirit of devoted and loving hearts.

3. A third sort—of whom we may reasonably suppose there must have been some representatives on this occasion—were such as cast in their offerings *from a constraining sense of duty*; because, understanding the necessary outlay of cost to keep the Temple in repair, and knowing it to be common property and a common benefit, they could not help recognising their participation in the common obligation to bear all the needful expense of its preservation. The motive here is certainly a higher and better one than that of mere worldly pride or of self-righteous pharisaism. So far as it goes, it is a good motive and one involving the honest recognition of unquestionable obligations. But if it be without any root in loving devotion to God, if it spring from a sense of duty which exists only as a principle of constraint then the offering which comes from it comes "grudgingly and of necessity," and falls far short of the approbation of God, who looketh only at the heart and loveth only "the cheerful giver."

4. Still another sort we may suppose to have had representatives on the occasion before us—viz., those who gave *from mere impulse.*

One and another such we may imagine to have been passing while our Lord was sitting over against the treasury, and simply because they happened to

be near it while others were casting in, and the proprieties of the time and place suggested, or seemed to require it, to have approached it and thrown in their chance contributions. Such offerings must of course have been made without any just sense of their obligation, without any consideration of the amount to be cast in, except probably to make it as little as decency would allow, and without care for the object to which the treasury gifts were to be appropriated. That they were the expression of no love to God, the tokens of no devotion to His service, is too obvious to require any remark.

Such as these, then, we may reasonably suppose to have come under our Lord's observation. It is not to be doubted that there may have been others who gave from higher motives, and not a small proportion, probably, whose motives, though not likely to be analysed by themselves, were, as presented to the all-seeing eye of Jesus, of mixed qualities, partly religious or benevolent, and partly selfish or carnal. But we have the express authority of the Lord Himself for the conclusion respecting them, that they all gave *of their abundance;* by which is not meant that they all gave *abundantly*, nor yet that they had abundance to give; for we should sadly miss the point in so understanding the assertion.

The meaning is, simply, that it was *of* their abundance that their gifts were offered ; *of* their abundance, their superfluity or sufficiency, *the fruit*, or *product of this*, rather than the self-sacrifice or self-denial which has its root in pure, deep, zealous love to God.

This was just the point of contrast with them in the offering of the poor widow. Not because she was poor, not the fact that she gave or could give but little ; but that being poor and having but little, she gave gladly, gratefully, lovingly, of that little. She could not give anything without stinting herself of her very living ; but in her loving heart she felt that it was far better to be stinted than not to give ; and so her very self-denial was turned unwittingly into a privilege, and the farthing that she cast in was made a thank-offering even of her penury. Therefore it was the measure of deeper, truer, more loving and zealous devotion, and therefore in the sight of Christ and of God it was more esteemed, more highly valued, than all the other offerings. It was in a real and true sense that the Lord declared that she had cast in "more than all they which had cast into the treasury ; for all they did cast in *of* their abundance, but she *of her want* did cast in all that she had, even all her living."

Among the lessons which are to be learned

from this example, there are two which are very clear.

1. The first is a lesson of great encouragement to those who have but very little that they can, even by real self-denial, offer to God, and to whom that little seems too insignificant for His acceptance or notice. Oh, how comforting, how encouraging to such, the Saviour's notice of the poor widow! how cheering His assurance that her offering was, in His estimation, more valuable than all the others!

2. A second lesson here taught not less clearly is, that faithful, loving, self-sacrificing hearts will ever find, and that too among even the very poorest as well as among the rich, something suitable to offer. There are few so poor as the widow in the Gospel; and none with a heart like hers will ever be lacking in, at least, equal ability. Yet, it must be noted how entirely the point of the transaction is lost sight of, and how low and base a perversion is put upon the high example here presented, when people speak of giving *their mite* to any Christian beneficence. They mean, simply, that the sum which they have cast, or propose to cast, in is very small, as we may be quite sure it is: whereas, the widow's mite was "all that she had, even all her living"!

The example afforded in her offering is indeed so

high as to be of rare attainment; and one almost shrinks from presenting it as an example, lest it should seem altogether impracticable. But it has its place in the Gospel narrative, unquestionably, for this purpose; and while few of us can hope to attain to her singleness of motive, it is most important for us all to note and remember that it was this motive alone which elicited the marked commendation of Him who is to be our final Judge. There are special grounds of appeal for every religious or benevolent object, and all these may be of weight, and entitled to our consideration, in their place; but, still it is true that if they supersede, if they be substituted for, loving devotion to God and our Saviour, the offerings which they may prompt us to make, however creditable in human estimation, will secure for us no approval from Him who values nothing but such devotion; while, on the other hand, if there be in us this devotion of the loving heart, and if our offerings be prompted and measured by it, we shall be certain to give, according to our ability, plenteously, if we have much; gladly of the little, if we have but little; and as certainly, our gifts will be accepted as valuable in the divine treasury, and our name will have its place in the roll of the divine benediction.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE SIN OF ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA.

"A certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, and kept back part of the price, (his wife also being privy to it,) and brought a certain part, and laid it at the Apostles' feet."—Acts v. 1, 2.

THIS transaction is presented in the inspired narrative in melancholy contrast with what is related in the verses immediately preceding: viz., that "the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul, neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common, neither was there any of them that lacked, for as many as were possessors of houses or lands sold them and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the Apostles' feet; and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need."

A most attractive and delightful picture this of the primitive Christian fellowship and charity: all the believers together, one in faith and members together in one Body; united by such perfect bonds of loving argument, that they could be truly said to be "of one heart and of one soul"; and this union accompanied by such "gladness and singleness of

heart," by such simplicity and sincerity in their common intercourse, and by such grateful recognition of the divine goodness, that, "praising God, they had favour with all the people."

Moreover, we have the explicit statement that "they had all things common," and that "no one said that aught of the things which he possessed was his own."

Whether, indeed, this means, as the language seems to imply, that individual property-rights were entirely relinquished, and that, for a brief period in that infant stage of the Church, there was, literally, a community of goods; or rather, that those who were property owners were so characterised by the spirit of Christian charity that there was a general readiness to sell even their houses and lands whenever there was apparent occasion to prevent the suffering of want by any members of the common household, we may not be able at this remote day and in an age of so different characteristics to determine with absolute certainty.

But it is clear that there was a combination of circumstances at that particular juncture which might well have called on the newly awakened and divinely quickened charity for special and extraordinary provisions. Many of the new converts were no doubt

foreign Jews, who, having embraced the religion of Jesus on the day of Pentecost, had remained at Jerusalem for further instruction, and being thus unexpectedly subject to expenses beyond those for which they had provided, and without access to their own personal means or resources, were temporarily dependent on the charitable aid of the Apostolic treasury supplied by the offerings of the resident and wealthier members. Then again, many of the native converts in humble condition would seem to have been quite likely to have lost the support which they had been previously accustomed to receive from their Jewish relatives and friends in the way either of direct assistance, or of traffic, or employment; and now that they were Christians, may have been unable to avail themselves of the usual privilege of the poor in partaking of the relics of the Temple sacrifices. Besides these cases, there were considerations from other sources that may have influenced some of the disciples. Some who had lands out of Judea, after becoming Christians, determined not to return to their possessions but to continue with the Apostles in Jerusalem. We have the record of one such case,—viz., that of Barnabas, of whom it is related, that "having land in Cyprus, he sold it, and brought the money, and

laid it at the Apostles' feet." On the other hand, some who were property owners in Jerusalem, knowing from the Saviour's prophecy that the city would be destroyed, may well have prepared for their flight by selling their houses and committing the proceeds to the care of the Apostles for the common benefit of the Church.

These and other circumstances, clearly peculiar to the time, seem to be sufficient to account for the extraordinary provisions which are recorded as then made by Christian charity, without a necessity of resorting to the theory of some commentators, that there was for a brief period in the Apostolic Church an entire and universal relinquishment of all property rights; much less of admitting the notion that the Gospel was designed to destroy all social distinctions and establish a permanent community of possessions.

Such a conclusion, though it has found its advocates, would be not only subversive of the principles of natural equity, but is also directly at variance with the general tenor and spirit of the divine revelation.

Instead of subverting the rights of property and sweeping away the foundation on which those rights are commonly based, it, rather, very clearly takes them for granted as fixed and settled, and

adds to them its sanction. For example, recognising the fact that there were, and were to be, in Christendom, as out of it, those having rightful claims to be called "the rich," it exhorts them, not to an unqualified and undiscriminating surrender of their possessions, but, to be sober and thankful, modest and humble, bountiful and charitable, not setting their hearts on the uncertain riches, but counting themselves as stewards of God in the possession of them, and therefore using them as good stewards, with a thankful recognition of His bounty and a true regard for His purposes of mercy and saving love. On the other hand, the perpetual existence of the conditions of poverty is as clearly recognised, and the poor are exhorted to be patient and industrious, to submit themselves contentedly to the wise orderings of divine Providence, and so to use the privations of the present life that, through them, they may attain to the inheritance of the unsearchable riches of the life to come.

In entire harmony with these principles, we have abundant evidence that, in fact, there were among the early Christians, as ever since and now, some rich and others poor. Thus, the benevolence of Dorcas—"full of good works and alms deeds which she did"—is recorded with commendation by St.

Luke. Again, we are told, that, on occasion of "a great dearth throughout all the world," the disciples of Antioch, "every man *according to his ability*, determined to send relief unto the brethren in Judea, which also they did." So St. Paul reminds the Ephesian elders: "I have showed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said: It is more blessed to give than to receive." So He admonishes the Corinthians: "Now, concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the Churches of Galatia, even so do ye; upon the first day of the week, let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him." Thus too, he gives instruction to Timothy for regulating the charities of the Church at Ephesus, and indicates the qualifications of the widows who should be admitted to a participation in their administrations.

All these examples illustrate the application of the Christian principles of almsgiving; but, at the same time, it is clear that these principles would have been devoid of application or purpose unless there had been both rich and poor in the Apostolic Church. Therefore, our conclusion here must be, that, while we are, without doubt, bound as

Christians to possess, and be actuated by, the same spirit of charitable benevolence that these primitive Christians exhibited, while, like them, we are bound to hold the means which God hath given to us, whatsoever they are, to their full extent, in trust, as faithful stewards of Him, and therefore to be ready always according to our ability to give for the relief of others' need ;—yet, that their example affords no countenance to the radical visionaries who dream that the Gospel was designed to subvert all social distinctions and establish a general intercommunity of possessions. Whether, even for a brief period in the special emergencies of the infant Church, there was such an intercommunity, we have seen to be extremely doubtful ; but even if that were the case, it was peculiar, arising from local and temporary circumstances, was entirely voluntary on the part of the members, and not continued or designed to be continued beyond the emergency which then called for it.

To these noble examples of Christian charity, the case in this chapter affords a dark and lamentable contrast. "A certain man, named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, and *kept back part* of the price, (his wife also being privy to it,) and brought a certain part and laid it at the Apostles' feet." It is clear, that, in making

this offering, these persons intended to convey the impression that they were contributing to the Apostolic treasury *the whole price* of the possession which they had sold. But the Apostle Peter by divine inspiration detected the hypocrisy, and immediately charged Ananias with the crime. "Why," said he, "hath Satan filled thy heart, to lie to the Holy Ghost? While it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thy heart? thou has not lied unto men, but unto God!" Thereupon, it is recorded that, "Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and gave up the ghost." About three hours after the same terrible visitation of divine judgment fell upon Sapphira, his wife and partner in the sin.

As this awful case has been put on record for our admonition, it is unquestionably entitled to our very serious consideration. What was the precise nature of the sin then committed? Why was it so suddenly and severely punished? And are we liable to the commission of it? are questions which concern us all.

In seeking to determine the precise nature of the sin, we must recognise clearly, in the first place, the fact that the whole transaction on the part of

Ananias and Sapphira was purely voluntary and done at their own option. They had land. It was their own; they were under no obligation whatsoever to part with it. But they voluntarily consulted together and determined to sell it. They carried this determination into effect. Even then the money received for it was their own; and they had a perfect right to use it as such for any lawful purpose whatever. All this is plain from the language of St. Peter: "While it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power?" The right of Ananias to this land and to the price for it is here distinctly admitted by the Apostle, nor does he intimate that there was any previous obligation to dispose of it in any particular way.

The act was voluntary. Of his own free will he sold the land, received the price for it, and then, reserving a part, voluntarily, in entire freedom from any constraint or obligation imposed by others, brought the rest and laid it at the Apostles' feet for the relief of those in need.

Was that a crime? Why, in the eye of the world, it was a noble act of generous benevolence. Yes, but there is One who seeth deeper than the world seeth; and in His sight it was not only

unworthy of praise, but deserved and received a terribly signal condemnation. The reason is this. It was not a true act, nor did it proceed from a true motive.

It was not a true act. It was an attempt at gross deception. When Ananias brought the money, as other disciples did, and laid it at the Apostles' feet, there was a virtual, if not a verbal declaration on his part that he was thus making an offering of all the money that he had received. On the part of his wife, we know that a direct falsehood to this effect was told.

Such an act, being false and deceitful in itself, no matter what the object or effect of it, could merit nothing but wrath from God who is holy and true. As the act was bad, so the motives prompting to it were bad also. Perhaps those who, in the season of special emergency, gave up all their possessions for the service of the Church, were entitled to receive a portion of its daily distributions. If so, Ananias and Sapphira, while retaining a considerable part of their possessions, might have expected to get remunerative interest on that which they gave up. Or, if there were no such management or consequent expectation, they might have looked for their reward in the degree of prominence and high estimation,

that such self-sacrificing benevolence would secure for them in the Church. In either case, the motive corresponded with the act: false in the sight of God, and looking only to the praise or reward of men. The divine judgment so speedily and terribly visited upon it, was, no doubt, one of those signal, monumental visitations, by which, in the beginning of a new dispensation, God has been wont to put His brand upon an act, so that, for all subsequent time, it may stand out as a warning; and men may thus be in no danger of addicting themselves to a similar line of conduct, without the opportunity of knowing its abominableness in His sight.

Therefore the question, whether we are in any liability to the commission of such a sin, is a question of very pressing and practical importance to us.

We cannot consider this question carefully without perceiving reason for decided apprehensions on account of such liability. It is not, indeed, at all likely that the circumstantial emergencies of that primitive time can recur in this age; nor is there any apparent probability that any of us will ever feel called upon to make, to any very appreciable extent, the sacrifice of selling houses and lands to use the price as an offering for the needs of the Church. But, in other circumstances and different

ways, there are numberless opportunities for the working of precisely the same spirit as that for which Ananias and Sapphira were so signally condemned. Let it be well observed, that the real ground of their condemnation was the spirit of their deed. In itself, had it been true, it were a deed of charity; but it was blackened by its principles.

Can we say that there is no soil for the rooting of such principles in our hearts, no field for their growth and fruitage in the sphere of our life? Can we say that we are in no danger of wearing the garb of religion, or of speaking its language, or doing any of its works, with an eye to our social standing, to the favourable estimation and the complaisant regards of our associates? Not to speak of the possibility of looking through this sort of advantage to the grosser result of material interest or profit, can we say that we are in no danger of hiding, under the religious possessions of our life or our apparent demeanour, some secret reservation of the heart? Is there no possibility that we may give, and that consciously and intentionally, to the ministers and our fellow-members in the Church of Christ, an impression that we are doing, or will do, for the Church and for Christ, what at the same time, we in our secret hearts know well that we

neither do nor intend? Is there no danger that even our deeds of unquestionable charity may yet be stained by sinister motives; by looking for the praise of men, rather than, simply, at the glory of God?

There can be no doubt of our need of watchfulness and careful self-examination in this direction. For it is probably but the simple truth to say that never before in the history of Christianity, have temptations to the sin of Ananias and Sapphira, and opportunities for it, been presenting themselves in so many ways, and in such subtle forms, as now. The liability arises not only from the fact that the profession of religion is with us pre-eminently respectable, a letter of credit to one who holds it, entitling to confidence and not unfrequently patronage and support; but still more, from the special prominence which in both the Church and the world of our time, is accorded to benevolent enterprises and schemes, and the favourable estimation in which all are agreed to hold any who are distinguished for special efficiency, either in the way of personal effort or of liberal giving for the furtherance of charitable purposes.

God forbid that any word of ours should have the effect to repress one impulse of charitable emula-

tion that may have been awakened in any heart, or to give one jot of encouragement to that withholding of effort or of giving, which comes of selfishness or covetousness ! but when the incentives to an interest in charitable schemes are so numerous, and when the material results of benevolent effort are so generally held in high estimation, it is surely not needless or superfluous to utter a word of warning against the danger of losing sight of the fundamental importance of that *simplicity of motive* which is the mark of nothing but genuine charity—fervent love to God and pure love to man for God's sake : without which, charitable deeds, however fruitful in results, are but the semblance of virtue, and if done under the pretence of a religious service, are but a repetition of the sin for which Ananias and Sapphira were summarily condemned and signally punished.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE FAULT OF THE ELDER BROTHER.

"Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. And he said unto him: Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. And he was angry, and would not go in."—St. Luke xv. 25—28.

THE story of the prodigal, his wandering, his repentance, return, and gracious reception by his father, was drawn from our Lord by the proud murmurings of the scribes and Pharisees, because of His reception of publicans and sinners ; and there can be no question that their spirit and temper were intended to be portrayed in this conduct of the elder brother.

It is not pleasant to turn from the contemplation of the paternal type of divine compassion and goodness, to analyse such an example of unbrotherly churlishness ; and we are tempted, in studying the parable, to dismiss the consideration of him with only a general impression that in his inexcusable hardness he presented a fit type of the self-complacency and the heartless unsympathy for the erring and the poor, which plainly appear to have been marked characteristics of the scribes and Pharisees, against whose murmurings our Lord had repeated occasion to justify His beneficent compassion.

A mere summary condemnation or exposure of them was, probably, very far from our Lord's intention in this part of the parable.

It may justly be admitted, that the objections which they raised against His method of dealing with those who had been known as notorious sinners were not, at least from their point of view, entirely groundless or unreasonable. For the truth is, that there was a very noticeable peculiarity in our Lord's treatment of sinners: an important particular in which He seemed to hold the sinner in an entirely different relation from that which had been recognised in any prevously accepted ethical or religious system. This peculiarity was not the announcement of the possibility of the divine forgiveness, nor even of the readiness of God to pardon the penitent. For the Jews had always been familiar with such announcements clearly and repeatedly made in the Old Testament Scriptures. It was not that Christ was kind and considerate toward those who had fallen into sins and repented. Surely in that He could not have been peculiar. There have always, everywhere, and among all people, thank God, been considerate men, kind men, merciful men, generous men: men and women who have known how to make due allowance for erring brothers and sisters,

and who have been ready and glad to help them back into right doing, and to the recovery of self-respect, by sympathy and by endeavours of personal kindness. It would probably be unjust to the Jewish Pharisees, as a class, to deny that there may have been even among them some who were, in this way and to this extent, kind and considerate.

This was not the peculiarity in our Lord's treatment of publicans and sinners, at which they murmured. No, it was, in the language of the Evangelist, that "He ate and drank with them." That is, He put them on an equality with respectable people. He admitted them within the line of conventional and ceremonial distinctions; He treated them as if He did not consider that they were defiled, that they had really no right to be admitted, but only came in on a merciful sufferance; nay, more and worse than this, that He treated them *with special favour*, and so seemed to make the fact that they had been great sinners, a reason for special glorification in their behalf. He had stern words, severe words, for those who were walking uprightly and comforting themselves respectably; and fervent exclamations of compassionate and affectionate regard for those who had disgraced themselves by living in open and notorious sin.

The point of the objection, then, was not that God is compassionate, or that Jesus was kind, but that *sin was encouraged*, that it was, in His system, apparently better to have lived ungodly than to have walked steadfastly in the path of righteousness, —better, in short, as an inspired Apostle afterwards put it, to have done evil, that in the salvation grace might abound.

The parable was given in reply to their murmuring, and the case of the elder brother as well as of the prodigal carries on the argument. The prodigal is the lost child, for whom there is special watching and anxiety, and therefore, on the return, special rejoicing ;—as, in the two preceding parables, the owners of the lost sheep and the lost piece of silver were specially glad on recovering, because they had had occasion for special searching, and regret for, what they had lost. So the Saviour's treatment of penitent sinners, and through Him the divine goodness, was vindicated as being in clear analogy with—nay, rather as being itself the type of, that which is unquestionably natural and commendable in human conduct ; which is, indeed, prompted by the best instincts of human affection and sanctioned by the truest impulses of human love.

In contrast with all this, we have presented to us the spirit and conduct of the elder brother. It is a hard, sharp contrast. Yet, even in drawing this portrait, the loving Saviour drew with no hard or sharp lines ; and we should miss the import of this part of the parable sadly, if we should omit to take into account the concessions which are clearly, though but briefly and implicitly, made to the fairness of the claim that he held in his consciousness of superiority, in certain points, both of position and character. It is true, unquestionably, that the elder brother had observed the proprieties and met the obligations of the filial relationship with a degree of steadfastness that put to shame the irregularities of the prodigal. He had fallen into no alienation either of heart or of life. He had been guilty of no determined or conscious rejection of his father's paternal prerogatives. He had never wished to break up the homestead, nor looked with grudging eye on the common sharing of his father's goods. Steadfastly, constantly, week after week, month after month, year after year, he had kept himself in true filial allegiance : meeting fairly the obligations, and discharging, on the whole, satisfactorily, the duties of a son in his father's house.

Was not this better than the career of the prodigal?

Most unquestionably better; incomparably better. And the parable clearly admits it—"Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine." Here is a full recognition of the superiority and the advantage of a life of steadfast obedience. Think of the wickedness, the recklessness, and the wretchedness that had been avoided, and you will see it. And, most certainly, as in the parable, so in actual life, there are, not the wicked only, but the righteous also,—that is, there are those who have served God steadfastly, and on the whole consistently, from their youth up, never having turned aside into the ways of wilful or intentional disobedience, nor had any of the wretched experience of abandoned wickedness. "There is none good, no, not one," in the sense of perfectness, or of goodness, that may claim to be meritorious; but in every generation there are those of whom it may be said, that they are "righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, blameless." Let no one suppose that the Gospel of Christ refuses to recognise such favoured ones or declines to give them its countenance. The Saviour's earthly life

would not be the model and universal Example, if it were not possible for the redeemed and regenerated children of God to grow from their infancy, as He grew, "in wisdom and in stature," and in steadily increasing "favour with God and man." This is the normal Christian life: its legitimate development, and that which should be generally looked for as the regular result of infant baptism and Christian training. Most unquestionably, a life so ordered is infinitely preferable to a life of abandoned sinfulness. It is not only exempt from all the ruinous waste and all the consequent wretchedness of the prodigal's career, but, what is a still higher advantage, it saves the character from the terrible deterioration, enslavement, and defilement, into which the prodigal inevitably falls, and by the chains of which he is almost hopelessly tied and bound.

It is the greatest possible mistake to suppose that the conditions of this Christian ideal life are fulfilled by mere superficial smoothness and propriety, or even by such a degree of general conscientiousness, such a regard for one's obligations and one's best interests, as will suffice for the maintenance of a respectable and quite becomingly proper deportment. Just this was the radical defect in the character

of the elder brother, as it is presented here in the portrait drawn by the Saviour. It is very clear that, notwithstanding the apparent consistency with which he had for many years maintained the position of a son, he knew little of the spirit of sonship. Even in his own plea for himself, and in the heat of self-exaltation, he could put his lifelong obedience to his father on no higher ground than that of servitude. "Lo, these many years do I *serve* thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment." Ah! that was precisely the difficulty. He had been *serving* all those years; in the position, but really losing sight, of the true relation of a son, and without the trustful and grateful love which is the only true inspiration of filial obedience. What wonder then, if now that a true apprehension of the fraternal relation came to be demanded of him, he signally and sadly failed? How could he be a loving brother, if he were not a loving son? Failing in the very first principle of the filial relationship, how was it possible for him to welcome back an erring brother, as a brother, or to appreciate with the least real sympathy the loving father's joy on receiving the wanderer back again into the home?

So his case, not less than that of the prodigal, stands for our warning; and the parable ends as it

began, with this great truth, that *the relation of sonship* is the only true relation to our heavenly Father, and *the loving spirit of sonship* the only principle of true obedience.

In either one of two ways we may be derelict to this relation: like the prodigal, by a conscious and intentional alienation of heart and abandonment of life; or, not less surely and effectually, by a life of mere smooth propriety, the decorum of which is determined by no loving devotion, but only by the favouring influences of the Providential allotment, or by a regard for one's best interests, or even by a general sense of obligation.

If any of us be at a loss to determine whether or no there be in our own heart this radical defect, we can hardly find a truer test than in an honest consideration of the question, whether we have, or lack, the yearning interest of real brotherly sympathy in endeavours for the reclamation of the erring and the salvation of the lost? Let us be specially careful not to mistake for this brotherly sympathy the patronising kindness which is very apt to be made its substitute. The elder brother in the parable would, no doubt, have very readily admitted his fallen brother's claims to this sort of kindness. There is no reason to suppose that he would not have been

quite willing to have the prodigal taken home again and put to work, and even treated with considerate kindness. Nothing in his conduct or complaint implies that he would not himself have been willing so to treat him. But the objection on his part was, that in honouring the prodigal's return with a feast, his past career of wickedness seemed to be altogether forgotten, and he was admitted at once to a place in the household of entire equality with the elder son who had never been guilty of filial disobedience, and even, for the moment, had apparent precedence in the father's regards.

Even so, it is easy for any of us to extend a patronising forgiveness, and even patronising kindness, to the erring and unfortunate. Such kindness is always understood to imply on the part of him who receives it a recognition of the decided superiority of his benefactor ; and it gratifies our pride and satisfies our sense of self-importance to occupy this relation. The pleasure is heightened if, at the same time, we have the satisfactory consciousness of doing deeds of charity. Therefore it is easy for any of us to give our erring brother this grace. But to recognise him as, in the fullest sense of the word, *our brother*, and treat him and love him as such, as not only, with us and others, one of the children

of our Father, but in the truest possible sense our own kith and kin,—that is not so easy, nor by any means so common. Yet it is precisely what Christ exemplified, and is really requisite both for imitating Him and for reclaiming the lost. The life of sin is, in its various degrees down to the lowest, a career, not only of error, but also of abandonment. Every step and every act involves a loss of self-respect, and of a rightful claim to the confidence of others ; and there can be no permanent restoration till the *hold upon trust*, which has been weakened and broken, is regained. If the wanderer is to become again an obedient and loving son, his Father's house must be to him a home, not a prison, and every brother must concur with the father in freeing him, as soon as possible, from the feeling that he could even be there in any sense a servant, or, in any degree, less than a son. No measure or degree of patronising kindness, nothing but the sympathy of a genuine brotherly interest, will suffice for this ; and the one perfect example, in this respect as in all others, is that of Him who has proved Himself to be the true Elder Brother in that He humbled Himself to the form of a servant that He might restore to us, the erring children of His Father, the adoption of sons.

CHAPTER XV.

THE FAULT OF THE MAN WITH ONE TALENT.

"Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee, that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed; and I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth; lo, there thou hast that is thine."—ST. MATTHEW xxv. 24, 25.

OF course, he went and hid it. What else could he have done with it, having such an estimation as he had of the character of the master from whom he had received the trust? For, observe, this is the point on which the contrast between him and the others who are represented in the parable as entrusted with talents, chiefly turns. It is not so much in the fact that to these others more was given—to one, ten talents, to another five, while he had only one—though that point has its own special lesson. But it is the difference in the temper and spirit of the men who received the several trusts. Those who received ten and five were alike in this, they took the sum in their hands to be simply a trust for investment and use. They carefully accepted it as such, and made it their business, their life work, to serve the master's interest in their dealing with it. So they were alike in their conduct, each putting his particular trust to the best and most profitable use. So they were alike in the effective result: each being able to return to

the master a double capital; and alike in their reward with his commendation and blessing. But the man entrusted with the one talent was of an entirely different spirit. He not only had a small capacity, which, we are warranted in supposing, was duly considered by the master in the amount of his trust; but the specially noteworthy point is that he had no delight, took no interested satisfaction, in the service which was the real purpose of the trust. He counted his master a hard man, one who would hold him to a merciless account for any possible mistake, and exact from him everything that the law would allow to be due. With such an opinion and feeling, what could he do? He could not invest the talent or use it in any kind of business, because there was an unquestionable possibility that the investment might result in a shrinkage instead of profit, and the business might prove a failure. With his want of heart in it, he could hardly have looked for any other result. Therefore the conclusion was most natural that the best policy was, simply to keep on the safe side; and do with the talent only just what was absolutely necessary to keep it, so that he could not be charged with dishonesty when the master should demand his final account.

This was the reason why he went and buried it. Taking this as the point of the parable which is specially noteworthy for our consideration, we think there is reason to feel that it touches in religion—in the way that we hold and aim to discharge our responsibilities before God—a fault which is so common, that it may almost be said to have become a very generally accepted characteristic of the religious life, in our time.

This man was in the place of a trusted servant, and he held fast to that relation : but *he did not serve.* He made it his aim simply to escape condemnation for downright dishonesty in the end ; but did no work for the master's interest, brought no gain into his treasury. The reason was because he had no loving regard for the master and took no delight in doing his will.

Now, in considering the present application of this illustration, for our own instruction, let us begin by trying to fix in our minds clearly and distinctly this fundamental truth : that, according to the teaching of our Saviour in this parable and, we may add, in all His other recorded discourses, our life in this world, with all its endowments of whatever sort or value, is for every one of us *simply a trust* committed to us by our Maker for His service.

This is the radical significance of that peculiar phrase with which our Lord began His parables almost without exception—"The kingdom of God," or, "of Heaven, is like." For clearly, the idea here is that the relation which it was His purpose to get men to recognise is that of life, not only or chiefly hereafter, but, fundamentally, now and here—of life in this world—to God the Almighty Sovereign. The sin of the world was its forgetfulness of this relation. Mankind here had become for the most part in bondage to their bodily senses. The life that now is had come to be estimated as the be-all and end-all of existence; and men in general had got into the habit of thinking and acting as if, while here, they were their own, and held a fee simple title to whatever share of the world's goods they could get into their possession. It was in direct contradiction of this erroneous notion, and for its correction, that our Lord kept constantly before His hearers the assertion of God's sovereignty in the world. He never allowed it to be forgotten that the world is not an outlying, self-existent fragment, but a legitimately constituted and sustained component, of the divine universe; and that it, with everything that is or that can possibly be in it, belongs to Almighty God. Therefore, He called

upon men to recognise this relation and hold themselves to its responsibilities. He taught that to live rightly here men must understand and feel that this world is a province of the kingdom of God ; that in it they are His creatures, and, having as such been made with intelligence for His service, that just this is their proper function—to do Him service, to use for this purpose and to this end whatsoever of the world's goods they may have, and thus prove their title to the divine commendation and the rewards of a heavenly existence when the life of this world shall have reached its close. This principle being recognised as fundamental, it follows that religion, as Christ inculcated it, is simply a consistent allegiance to this relation. The root meaning of the word "religion" implies this ; signifying, as it does, a due regard for God ; but our Lord may be said almost to have made it His special purpose to bring it out so clearly, and illustrate it so fully, that mistake or forgetfulness on the point might thereafter be inexcusable.

Let us here observe, that religion, as thus defined and illustrated, includes *the whole* of life. It is not a mere technicality—moving only in the domain of sentiment, and finding its expression in nothing but formal ceremonies—but it goes down to the very

foundation, and determines the real character and purpose of our being, taking in all that we have and are. The question which it proposes to us is, whether or no we believe ourselves to be creatures of God, and admit, as a fact, that this world in which we are living is His world? With the positive determination of this question, it calls upon us for simple consistency in recognising our divine relationship, and for integrity in fulfilling its obligations. "The kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called *his own* servants and delivered unto them *his* goods." We are, every one, in that kingdom, all subjects and servants of Him who is the Sovereign King. Whatsoever we have in life, is not, and cannot be, ours, but His; and we have it but to use, to use for Him, in His service and for the promotion of His interests. Very plainly, then, it follows that this service is, and should be felt to be, the real business of our life, and that we should give ourselves to it as the aim, as well as the end, of our being. There is nothing which we can rightly hold back; no enterprise in which we can engage, or effort that we can put forth, in any department of life, without reference, or not at least without ultimate subserviency, to this purpose.

This brings us back directly to that which we

noted in the outset as the point of the parable—viz., the *spirit* and *temper* with which our service unto God is to be performed. The recognition of our dependent relationship toward Him is something; the admission of our obligation to serve Him with what we have and are is more; but it is obvious that there may be both of these, without any *heart* for *His interests.* If there be this defect in us, it is radical; and its effect in our case cannot be any better than it was in that of the man with one talent, in the parable. In his very admission of his master's ownership of the talent, and his sense of obligation in holding it, he was paralysed, because he felt he was holding for a hard master, in whose service there was no satisfaction, and from whom there could be expected nothing but rigorous exaction in the final reckoning. He was not, let it be observed, in any sense insincere or dishonest. He did not violate his trust by any taint of fraud; did not misappropriate it for covetous speculation; did not squander, or even use, it for his own gratification. He simply lacked heart to use it for precisely the purpose, and in the service, for which it had been given; and therefore did nothing but bury it in the earth for safe keeping.

Is it not obvious that we may likewise admit that

we are not our own, that whatsoever we have and are is of God, and therefore that we are under inevitable obligations to serve Him with all that we have and are,—is it not obvious that we may be sensible of this, and honest in intending to hold ourselves to the responsibility, and yet, like him, have within us such a spirit and temper as will incite us to do nothing for God, and aim at nothing but a final escape from His condemnation? Is it not evident that want of a true, loving regard for God, and the lack of any genuine and hearty satisfaction in His service, must have this effect in us? must inevitably paralyse our will and unnerve our disposition to work for His interests and make our life, in any truly effective sense, subservient to His glory?

Are we not touching here a very common fault? Is it not with reason that we have intimated an apprehension that it may be almost a characteristic fault of the religion of our time? May there not be reason for an honest consideration of our own exemplification of religion, to see if it may not possibly be vitiated by this fault? If our religion be a mere technicality instead of the bond of allegiance to God in our entire life,—if we admit the obligation to serve Him, simply because we feel our relation to

Him to be that of a bond-servant and dare not repudiate it; if, at the same time, there be in our heart no loving devotion to Him, no genuine satisfaction in doing the work of our life as work for Him, in His service and to His glory,—if our aim be just to escape from His condemnation and save our soul from consignment, by His wrath, to everlasting perdition,—why, how does our case differ from that of this unprofitable servant in the parable? Is it not clear that we feel, in relation to our divine Master, just precisely as he felt towards his? We think of Him, as he did, only as One who is hard and exacting: we are, as he was, afraid; and so our very recognition of His Mastership, and our admission of obligation to Him to be His servant, can have in our case, as in his, only the effect of paralysing us from any effective service, and can lead to no other resolution than just to keep on the safe side, and avoid final and fatal loss.

His final sentence shows, that not even an earthly master could accept in the end the profitless result of such heartless service; and much less is it likely to be accepted in His sight, who discerneth the thoughts and intents of the heart, and hath no pleasure in any offering which is not that of a willing and loving mind. Even if there might be a

hope of escaping this final issue, the present point is, that religion which is inspired by no better spirit or higher motive must, inevitably, be profitless and worthless. The heartlessness of its professing adherent both robs him of satisfying interest in doing what is confessed to be duty, and puts the brand of worthlessness upon even that which he does.

If there be any reason to suspect the taint of such a mistake in our own case, let us pray God to help us, not only to discover, but also to correct it. The true corrective is in a thorough consecration of our hearts, with all their affections, to God's service; to think of Him ever as, what He is in truth, our All-merciful and tenderly loving Father, as well as our Almighty and Sovereign Creator; to know and feel that, as He made us for Himself, our truest happiness and best welfare and highest destiny must be found in living for Him.

Religion will then be to us, not a mere saving technicality of our life, but the hallowing spirit of our whole life; and, in hallowing, it will inspire our whole life with grateful and satisfying cheer. Whatever may be our earthly lot, we shall count it as of divine appointment; and whatsoever its endowments, be they of much or but little, we shall hold them as divinely granted trusts to be used in the service

of the Master whose we are, and to whose interests we are lovingly devoted. So, we shall carry our religion into every department and phase of our being. Everywhere it will be congruous: in all experience, a well-spring of satisfaction and delight. It will have, indeed, its own special devotional and sacramental functions, which will be thought of and participated in both as duties and enjoyments; but its spirit will never leave us, nor be found to want inspiring motive or sustaining cheer in any relation, or any possible circumstance, of our life.

This is, for every one of us, our true life. This is the true exemplification of Christianity; this is the true realisation of its purpose as the religion of humanity; and this is the true way to its promised salvation in the life eternal.

CHAPTER XVI.

CHRIST'S OBSERVANCE OF THE SABBATH.

"And it came to pass, as He went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread on the Sabbath day, that they watched Him."—St. Luke xiv. 1.

THE purpose for which the enemies of our Lord were watching Him on this occasion plainly was, to see if He would not say or do something in violation of their traditionary rules for keeping the Sabbath day. It is very evident from the Gospels that this was a point on which our Lord's conduct, from the beginning of His public ministry, was especially offensive to the Jewish leaders. He seemed almost to take pains to show that He had no respect for their accepted and cherished scruples as to what might, or might not, be done on the Sabbath. At the outset of His ministry His disciples were allowed to gather food for themselves on the Sabbath, in a way which was positively forbidden by the technical rules ; and their conduct was not only defended and fully justified by Him against the Pharisaic accusers, but these scrupulous accusers were also plainly turned upon with the charge, that they had forgotten the scripture which saith, " I will have mercy, and not sacrifice," and

explicitly told that "the Son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath day." After this, He repeatedly did beneficent work in the synagogues and other public places on the Sabbath; and, when accused or questioned, He never yielded in the least to the current theories of Sabbath observance, but unhesitatingly contradicted them in justifying His acts.

So this was one of the points wherein they found fault with Him, and from almost the beginning of His ministry they were on the watch for additional evidence in this count of their intended indictment of Him as a breaker of the law.

It must not, however, be concluded that our Lord was, in any true sense, a violator of the Sabbath. In this respect, as in all others, He was under the law and perfectly obedient to the law. We may be sure that whatever the law did prescribe, in its proper construction or whatever was conducive to its pious observance, was never on any occasion, much less habitually, disregarded or neglected by Him. There is in the Gospel narrative the clearest evidence that, throughout His life from very childhood, He was ever known as scrupulously regular in His attendance at the stated times of the Sabbath synagogue service; and so, that He was habitually

observant of the sanctity of the Sabbath as the day of holy worship and instruction. Mention of this, as His custom, occurs as one of the first points noted in the Gospel history. For instance, St. Luke tells us that, when He returned to Nazareth after His temptation in the wilderness, He went, "*as His custom was*, into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up for to read." Again and again throughout the Gospel of this Evangelist, as well as of those of the others, there are like notices which serve to show clearly that, wherever He might be, His habit was uniform on all Sabbath days to go to the synagogue and join heartily and devoutly in its stated appointments of worship and religious instruction. We must take into due account both of these two sides of our Lord's conduct in relation to the Sabbath, to get the true explanation of His attitude and intended example.

It is clear, on the one hand, that He purposely contravened, to show unmistakably His disapprobation of, the current Jewish superstition.

Under the traditional teaching of the Rabbins, the fourth commandment had become, in our Lord's time, to the whole Jewish nation, a yoke of bondage. They had learned to construe it, not as it is in truth, a provision of mercy to keep man above a slavish

bondage to the life of this world, but as a rigorous rule of sheer religious formalism. Consequently its observance was hedged in by countless regulations that had no authority in the divine enactment, but were grounded only in the casuistical distinctions and nice definitions of the Rabbinical commentators. Some of these prohibitions are so arbitrary, and at the same time so absurd, as to seem hardly credible. For instance, it was determined to be unlawful to catch an insect on the Sabbath, unless at the very moment the hurt of its sting was felt; or to climb into a tree for any purpose, lest a branch or twig should be broken; and if one's companion fell into a pit on the Sabbath he could only have needful nourishment thrown to him, but could not be rescued till the next day. These are extreme illustrations of their superstition; but they show how puerile, and at the same time how grievous in its bondage, this superstition was.

Against this our Lord set His face, and both in His teachings and conduct brought out the truth that the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath; that the sanctification of the day was for a real need in man's nature and for witnessing to his higher relations and destiny, not to put him under the bondage of religious formalism; and,

therefore, that the reason for even its religious observance was not in the letter of the enactment, but in the nature of man and his essential relationship to the spiritual world.

His purpose seems clearly to have been the correction of the superstitious error, and the restoration of a true sense of the original meaning and use for which the observance of the Sabbath day had been divinely commanded. Therefore, He was, as we have seen, equally careful to observe, habitually and regularly, the stated appointments, both of time and place, by which the consecration of the Sabbath to its true purpose of religious worship and instruction was maintained and preserved.

It is unquestionably true that to our Lord's treatment of the Sabbath is traceable the beginning of the change in its observance which, as we know, came with the introduction of Christianity. The first disciples, who gathered their supply of food on that day, by plucking corn in the field, must already have been emancipated by His teaching from much of their old superstition ; and a true sense of the legitimate application of Christian freedom in this respect must have been not only awakened, but firmly fixed, in the mind of the Church, by the

example to the same effect, which was constantly set by our Lord throughout His personal ministry. So, it is not surprising, that after His resurrection from the dead, the Church was prepared to understand that the essence of Sabbath sanctity consisted not in the special sacredness of that which they had been accustomed to call the seventh day of the week, and very soon began to feel that the first day had received from His resurrection a sanction of appropriateness for the great Christian feast, which might justly entitle it to take the place, in Christian observance, of the day which had been hallowed by the tradition of a finished creation.

It is not surprising that, consequent upon this change, many other changes have come over the observance of the day of consecrated rest, in Christendom, so that it has become a fair question, and entitled to be treated as such in Christian discussion, whether there is now any proper identification of the new with the old ; and if there be in any respect, how far either the injunctions or the prohibitions of the fourth commandment have legitimate application to the day which is now observed.

It is not easy to reach a perfectly clear and indubitable solution of this question ; and Christian

history affords many illustrations, both of difficulties involved in its discussion, and of practical dangers consequent upon an unqualified decision on one side or the other. But, so far as a decision is necessary for the determination of one's personal conduct as a Christian, there are certain conclusions which may be considered as settled, at least in the Church. A brief statement of these may fitly bring our present consideration of the subject to a close.

First, then, we must remember, and clearly recognise the fact, that the Fourth Commandment is one of the Ten Commandments; and, therefore, included in, not the ceremonial, but the *moral* law; and that, as such, it must be, *in some sense*, of universal and perpetual force. If this might be deemed questionable anywhere in Christendom, it certainly cannot be in any Church whose Liturgy is that of the Book of Common Prayer; for here the rubrical order for the reading of the Ten Commandments by the priest, before the altar, on every Lord's day, plainly determines the judgment of this Church to be, that the Fourth Commandment is to be received, in common with the others, as the moral law, and held to be obligatory as such.

In determining the legitimate application of the command to our own conduct, we have the example

of Christ and His apostolic followers ; and under this guidance we seem authorised to conclude that the specification, in the commandment, of the seventh day, was not intended to fix an arbitrary sanctity on the day which happened in the Jewish calendar to be counted as the seventh day of the week ; but, rather, to set apart one day in seven for sanctified rest and divine worship, and to teach mankind that the Creator, in giving to the world the use of time for its work, had reserved this portion for the special recognition of their relation to Him and to the life eternal.

Then, as to the particular day which ought to be observed by us. We have simply to walk after the rule of the whole Christian Church from the beginning, in esteeming the day of our Lord's resurrection as determined by that crowning miracle to be most appropriate.

Having these two points clearly determined, we may safely look to our Lord's example and teaching for a determination, so far at least as is necessary in ordering personal conduct, of questions which are likely, from time to time, to rise as to the proper observance of the holy day.

Very clearly, its principal part is properly appropriated to the worship of Almighty God, the

devoutly thankful celebration of the Eucharistic Feast, and the religious instruction of the sanctuary. This means its *principal* part ; not merely a half-hour in the early morning or late hour in the evening,—for this is, simply, substituting a trifling pretence for the principal purpose of the consecrated day. With such appropriation, it is also to be remembered that the whole day is, in some special sense, time that is consecrated. It is the portion of time which God has reserved as His own. Six days He allows us for the work of the world ; the seventh is for that which is not of this world, but for that which has direct relation to Him, and for the special exercise and refreshment of that part of our nature which is spiritual and immortal. It does not exclude any work of real necessity ; for such work is liable at any time and on any day to be essential, for self-preservation and for continuing the welfare of life ; and it was clearly sanctioned by the Saviour's permitting His disciples to gather food on the Sabbath for the supply of the day's need of nutriment. Nor does it exclude works of beneficence ; for these are, when rightly done, always in a true sense acts of worship, since they are mercifully counted as service rendered unto the Lord, and were directly sanctioned by many recorded

miracles of the Saviour on the Sabbath day. Nor, again, does it exclude, after the due observance of its principal portion in holy worship, such rest and even recreation as may not be inconsistent with our divine relationship, and may give thankful cheer for the more healthful and buoyant discharge of all the responsibilities of life. There is no licence here for godless amusement, or for indulgence in that which has no higher aim or purpose than the entertainment of sheer frivolity: but an honest conscience may safely remember with thankfulness, that it is distinctly recorded in the Gospels that even the Saviour Himself, after the close of the synagogue service, did not refuse to accept an invitation to dine with one of the chief Pharisees on the Sabbath day.

The conclusion of the whole matter seems to be summed up most truly in the Saviour's words: "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath." The command for its observance was not given to put mankind under a yoke of bondage —not even of religious bondage—but as a merciful privilege of divine beneficence; and its true purpose is to keep alive in us, while we have our life in this world, a sense of our relationship to that world which is eternal. It comes in with periodic regu-

larity to give us needful rest, and so save us from slavish thraldom to the work of the world. It calls us to the special observance and enjoyment of religious offices, and so raises us above the world and brings us into direct communion with Him who is the Father of spirits, and with the spiritual ministers of His heavenly temple. It brings to us needful refreshment for all our faculties, and special increments of spiritual strength, to lift us steadily upwards, and make the real aim and end of even this temporal existence our most fitting preparation for that heavenly world which is to be our final and eternal home.

CHAPTER XVII.

CHRIST IN SOCIETY.

"And when the scribes and Pharisees saw Him eat with publicans and sinners, they said unto His disciples: How is it that He eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?"—ST. MARK ii. 16.

JESUS, having recently called Levi or Matthew to be His disciple, is invited to be the guest of this new follower; and, the invitation being accepted, a number of Matthew's friends are also invited to meet Him at a social meal. The previous occupation of Matthew—that of a publican or Roman tax-collector—had brought him into business and social relations with many of both the higher and lower grades of society; and, accordingly, we find at this entertainment that scribes and Pharisees and also publicans and sinners are present. The former, priding themselves on both their respectability and piety, are very careful to let it be seen clearly that the latter, though present, are not permitted to associate with them. Matthew was probably superior to his class in an honest reputation, and perhaps in other respects, and this may account for the Pharisees' acceptance of his invitation. But they could not for a moment allow their patronage of him, or their particular respect for him, to compromise

in the least their social and ecclesiastical position. Accordingly they occupied "the chief rooms" in the feast by themselves, and left the publicans and sinners to eat in lower places by themselves.

Jesus, strange to say, took His place without either affectation of condescension or assumption of superiority, in the midst of this disreputable class, and eat and conversed with them.

This excited the astonishment, and even, as we can easily imagine, the horror of the Pharisees, and they put to the disciples of Christ the question, "How is it that He eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?"

The question, in their minds, may have referred chiefly to the want of regard for ceremonial purity which such association on the part of Christ seemed to evince,—just as, on another occasion, they were offended because He eat with unwashed hands: but it may have a much deeper meaning. It may look to the apparent inconsistency, not ceremonial only but real and essential, between the claims of Christ both as to His own nature and the character of His religion, with such common and familiar intercourse among all classes of people and such participation in the common enjoyments of life. The question, then, "*how* is it?" may be equivalent

to asking, On what principles, and for what reasons, He allowed Himself the indulgence of such common intercourse?

This question is one most worthy of consideration, and important to be rightly understood. There is no characteristic of Christ, no feature of His earthly life, that is so prominently brought forward, and so much insisted upon by many in our day, as this. It would seem almost as if it were considered one of the discoveries of the age that Christ did actually eat with publicans and sinners, that He was a person of social sympathies and habits, not living as an ascetic apart from the common life of humanity, but participating in all its common intercourses, drawing to Himself every human being, and pouring His heart into every human joy and woe. Accordingly we hear much said of the genial and social character of His religion. Indeed, this feature is seemingly getting to be considered the most valuable characteristic of the Christian revelation, to be that which really makes it a Gospel—a revelation of good tidings to men. So it is thought to be one of the leading duties of Christians, and particularly of Christian ministers, to promote sociability, to bring people together and show them how to enjoy life and be happy. Perhaps it is not exaggerating

to say that many persons have really no higher conception of the Christian Church than as an association for this purpose, and no appreciation of its ministrations except as they seem to conduce to this result.

Such persons have a decided impression that Christ made it a principal aim of His life, and leading purpose of His ministry, to promote festive sociability: that He adapted Himself to all classes of people by complying facilely with all their ways and customs; that He eat with publicans and sinners, or with any others, to render Himself acceptable to them, and to show them that He had no objection to such festive indulgences, but on the contrary, wished to mark them with His special approbation.

Before we are warranted in formulating or holding any theory of religion which is based on the life and teachings of Christ, it is obviously necessary to learn from the inspired record exactly what His example and precepts touching the point were. We propose to take up in their order, as recorded, the several occasions of social hospitality in which Christ is represented as participating, and to note His conduct in them, that we may ascertain the principles by which it was really actuated.

1. The first occasion, of this sort, was the marriage feast in Cana of Galilee, recorded in the Gospel by St. John, chapter ii. The Evangelist tells us, "there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there, and both Jesus was called and His disciples to the marriage." He was then just about to enter upon His public ministry; and the disciples here spoken of were the first five or six whom He had chosen. The invitation was accepted; and there is nothing in the Gospel narrative which requires or authorises the supposition that the feast was conducted any otherwise than as such feasts were commonly conducted, in that country then and now. Nor is there anything to warrant the supposition that Jesus, being present, manifested disapprobation of the festivities, or put any irksome restraint on those who engaged in them. On the contrary, it is expressly recorded, that when they wanted wine, He worked a miracle to supply the want. This must certainly be conceded; and there are very cheering lessons to be learned from it. But, at the same time, is it possible for any of us to read the narrative, without feeling that Christ is there represented as being, in some mysterious sense, separate, sacredly separate, from the company in which He was bodily present;

or, at any rate, most sacredly separate from any indulgence in unseemly levity or licentious hilarity? The application of His mother to Him when they wanted wine; His reply, stern, and almost severe in its dignity; the charge to the servants, "Whatsoever He saith to you, do it," and their ready and scrupulous obedience to Him,—even drawing water to fill six pots to the brim, and then, to His order, without questioning, drawing from them and bearing to the governor of the feast;—all this shows that there was felt a mysterious sacredness about Him, and that His presence and whole conduct in that festive scene did conduce to the effect which the Evangelist tells us was produced by the miracle —viz., to manifest forth His glory, and cause His disciples to believe on Him.

2. The second social scene is described in the seventh chapter of the Gospel by St. Luke. It was in the house of a Pharisee, who, we are told by the Evangelist, had "desired Him that He would eat with him." "And He went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat."

Here we find the Saviour a guest of one of the higher or more reputable class. Does He seem to have made it a point to render Himself particularly acceptable to that class? Did He flatter His host,

or conform with supple facility to his prejudices and customs? Read the Gospel narrative, and see. The Evangelist goes on straightway to tell us that "behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner"—a sinner, as we cannot but infer from the phraseology, of commonly disreputable fame —"when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and"—encouraged by His presence, to enter where she would otherwise have been excluded—she "stood at His feet behind Him, weeping, and began to wash His feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed His feet, and anointed them with the ointment." The Pharisee is offended, and concludes at once that Jesus cannot be a prophet, or He would not permit such a woman to touch Him. What then is the conduct, and what is the language of Jesus? Turning to His self-righteous host, He says, "Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence; and the other, fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him most?" The Pharisee answers, as he must, "I suppose that

he to whom he forgave most." The Saviour replies, "Thou hast rightly judged"; and then, turning to the poor penitent outcast, He says, "Simon, seest thou this woman? I entered into thy house; thou gavest me no water for my feet, but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss; but this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint; but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And He said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven." Then, while they that sat at meat with Him were questioning within themselves, though in their amazement and awe they could not speak, He added this most encouraging benediction to the woman: "Thy faith hath saved thee: go in peace."

This is all the Evangelist tells us of that entertainment. It is enough to illustrate the wonderful, superhuman, but gentle and loving, dignity of Christ; yet there is nothing, we need scarcely say, which warrants the inference that He made it a point, for the sake of being acceptable, to adapt Himself to

the opinions and ways of the Pharisee who was His host, or of the Pharisee's friends whom He had been invited to meet.

3. The next occasion of the kind—passing over that of the text, which occurred meanwhile—is recorded in St. Luke's Gospel, chapter xi. This, too, was in the house of a Pharisee. "A certain Pharisee," the Evangelist tells us, "besought Him to dine with him: and He went in, and sat down to meat."

If there was any one thing about which the Pharisees were most scrupulous, it was the performance of the ceremonial ablutions. Observing strictly all the traditions of the Elders, they held "the washing of cups, and pots, and brazen vessels, and tables"; and "when they came from the market," or from any place where they might by any possibility have come in contact with sinners, they would not dare to eat, "unless they had first washed their hands." But on this occasion, Christ in the very outset makes Himself intolerably offensive to His host and the whole company, by totally disregarding this point, not simply of etiquette, but in their estimation of religious propriety. It seems strange at first that He should have done so, for it is an innocent and cleanly thing to wash the hands; and if He could be more

acceptable by simply doing this, it might be supposed that He would have had no objection to it. The reason why He did it not, is clearly apparent from what follows in the account. This frequent washing, though perfectly innocent and even commendable in itself, had come to be one of the vain superstitions of the Pharisees,—one of the means, in fact, by which they satisfied their consciences while indulging the impurity of lust in their hearts. Therefore the Saviour would not wash, that He might expose their hypocrisy. The narrative further shows with what terrible, scathing, burning indignation He met their offended scruples. "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites: for ye are as graves which appear not, and the men that walk over them are not aware of them. Ye fools, that cleanse the outside, but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness." There were lawyers present, men whose profession it was to interpret and apply the moral as well as the civil law; and them He did not spare. "Woe unto you also, ye lawyers: for ye lade men with burdens grievous to be borne, and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers!" Truly, there is nothing here to show that Christ made it His aim to be agreeable, but much to show that here, as elsewhere, He would not suffer either

courtesy or agreeability or anything else to stand, for a moment, in the way of what was really His aim—viz., the advancement of righteousness and truth.

4. There is still another occasion on which He dined at the house of a Pharisee; and that too on a Sabbath day. It is recorded in St. Luke's Gospel, chapter xiv. verses 1-25. There were lawyers and Pharisees present then, as on the last occasion. From the Evangelist's account, it appears that He gave offence to their scruples, in the first place by working a miracle for the cure of one who had the dropsy; and then, when He marked how those who were bidden with Him chose out the chief rooms, He took occasion to give them precepts of humility, which, under the circumstances, must have grated harshly indeed on their ears. Nor was He content with this; but went on to advise His host that, when He should again make a dinner or supper, He should call, not his friends, nor his brethren, neither his kinsmen, nor his rich neighbours, but the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: for so He promised a blessing and a recompense at the resurrection of the just. Then, after giving this advice, the Evangelist tells us, Christ went on to reprove the whole company for their neglect of the divine overtures

of mercy, by giving them the Parable of the Great Supper, the invitations to which were refused and slighted by them that were bidden. This parable closes the Evangelist's account of that entertainment.

5. The next, recorded by the same Evangelist, in the nineteenth chapter, was under very different circumstances. There was a certain man named Zaccheus, chief among the publicans, and a man of wealth, who had shown in an extraordinary manner his desire to see Jesus; and of him, our Lord, knowing beforehand the glad welcome He would receive, became a self-invited guest. There were not wanting on this occasion, those who murmured that He should allow Himself to be the guest of one whose occupation made him necessarily to be reputed a sinner; but the illustration which the Evangelist gives, of the conversation between the Saviour and His publican host, shows very clearly that His conduct and his aim were the same as on other similar occasions. "Zaccheus stood and said unto the Lord, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold. And Jesus said unto him: This day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham.

For the Son of man is come, to seek and to save that which was lost."

6. There is yet one other social occasion in the Gospel records ; but it must have been participated in, both by our Lord Himself and by all the others present, with feelings of sadness rather than of festivity. It was that supper which was made for Him in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, only a few days before His crucifixion ; and it was then that Mary anointed Him with the precious ointment of spikenard, and received His blessing for the deed, with the declaration that she had done it in anticipation of His burial.

We have now considered all the occasions, in the Evangelistic records of our Lord's earthly life, in which He is represented as participating in festive or social entertainments. We must, in reviewing them, have come to the conclusion, that the true answer to the question, *How* is it that He ate and drank with publicans and sinners, or with any other classes ? is, not as some who aim to be reformers, and many of the world-loving Christians of our time, are pleased to think,—for the purpose of making Himself or His religion popular ; not to show that Christian principles have their best development in a character that is always acceptable in all

sorts of company; nor yet, to show that the ministers or members of His Church should make it their duty to take the lead in all sorts of schemes for the promotion of social enjoyment, or, at least, let it be distinctly understood that their religion would never conflict with any such arrangement :—Oh no, it is very clear that not this, or anything like this, could have been the object of Christ. It is true, indeed, that He did eat and drink with publicans and sinners as well as with scribes, Pharisees, and lawyers; true, indeed, that He did participate in scenes of society and hospitality ; true, that He was no ascetic, but moved ever among men of all classes, with the exercise of the most ready and free, as well as truly cordial sympathies. But, at the same time, it is most clearly evident that there was a separation, on all occasions and in all circumstances, between Him and the shallow and untrue conventionalities of the world in which He mingled ; that was everywhere and at all times, and by all with whom He came into association was felt to be, pure, unworldly, holy, heavenly, free from carnal or sensual tastes, and having a single eye to the exemplification of righteousness and the promotion of salvation. His whole recorded history verifies completely the answer, which He Himself gave, to the question of

the scribes and Pharisees in the text—viz., that He was, as a physician, going among the sick, that He might make them whole.

It is certain that in this, as in all other respects, they who profess to be His followers must have His spirit, and in the stations and opportunities of their daily life walk after His example. The only question that can be admitted, may be, whether, in any given case, His higher nature and office authorised some features of deportment in Him which would be unwarrantable in us : but, these being excepted, there can be no Christian consistency, and no safety, otherwise than by a faithful following of Him. Only thus can His image be formed in us : only thus can we exemplify the principles or obtain the sanctifying and saving effects of His religion.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CHRIST'S FOLLOWERS IN SOCIETY.

"If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."—ST. JOHN xv. 19.

"Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind; that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God."—ROMANS xii. 2.

EVERY one feels, in reading the life of our Lord in the New Testament, that He was a Being who, though in the world, was not of the world. The secret of this characteristic was, clearly, not in His circumstances or His formal demeanour. He was not an ascetic ; He did not separate Himself, in His habitual life and conversation, from the common society of mankind. That was true of His forerunner—John the Baptist. He was "the voice of one crying in the wilderness." Separated in all the habits as well as the principles and feelings of his life from the men of his day and generation, he made the desert his home, and refrained from intercourse with his kind, even so much as to deal with them for the supply of food or clothing. But Christ, on the other hand, came into the world, and mingled freely in all the scenes of life. He maintained no seclusion ; retired to no desert ; but moved among men, conversing with them in the streets of the cities and towns, on the highways, in the markets and synagogues. Nor only so, but He

participated with them also, as we have seen, in their social and domestic pleasures. Beginning His public ministry by attending, with His disciples, a wedding feast, He accepted invitations to social entertainments from all classes ; eating and drinking now with publicans and sinners, and now with scribes, Pharisees, and lawyers ; now with those who would proudly assert their right to the chief rooms in a feast, and now with a few of His own humble disciples who desired no other place than a seat at His feet. In a word, He was remarkable for His social sympathies and habits ; for His readiness of fellowship with all human beings, and His opening and outpouring of heart in every human joy or woe.

While this is true, it is yet very clear that He did always maintain a certain real separateness from the world in which He thus moved. He was in it, and engaged in its various scenes, but still He was clearly, and was ever felt by those with whom He associated to be, not of it. Most certainly His real, inner life was not there, or was there only as subservient for the time to the high aims and purposes of His being. He never went into any scene of social intercourse where He did not make it felt,—and that, too, without effort or design, but simply by the true and unavoidable expression of what He was,

—that His presence, while imposing no restraint on innocent or seasonable enjoyment, while lacking no sympathy which enables one to feel for and with his kind, was yet uncongenial with carnal indulgences, positively excluded or openly opposed all the unrighteous and uncharitable distinctions which the fashions of such society ordinarily make, and raised the whole scene into an atmosphere above all customary conventionalities, making its intercourse seem more like that of heaven than of earth. So when, in the outset of His public career, He attended the wedding feast, there was such a manifestation of glory as to fix immovably the faith of His new disciples ; so when He dined with Pharisees, He put down at once their pride and exposed their hypocrisy ; so when He ate and drank with publicans and sinners, He proved Himself to be as a physician among the sick that He might cure them, the Son of man seeking out the lost, that He might save them.

Since this characteristic in Him, as every other in His earthly life, was undoubtedly a true exemplification of the principles of His religion, the question which we have to consider is,—In precisely what way, and to what extent, we are required or authorised to imitate it ; and in the proper imitation

of it, what is to be our relation and comportment with the world ?

It is obvious at once, that there were peculiarities in the high nature and special office of Christ, which warranted a tone and bearing in Him, that would not be warrantable without qualification in any of us. He had, without question, a right to speak in terms of rebuke and denunciation, which would not be allowable for us to adopt against any exhibition of wrong. Notwithstanding that He was, in His human generation, truly a man, and subject to all the conditions of humanity, He was, at the same time, the only begotten Son of the Most High God, and His whole life on earth was assumed for the special purpose of working out the world's redemption. The conventionalities of mere human civilisation, the rules of deportment which are held as the code of etiquette in what the world calls society, were nothing to Him; less than nothing when based, as they often are, on distinctions which are unreal and unjust. Therefore it was His indisputable right to speak without reserve on all occasions and to all persons. Therefore, when the guest of a publican, He might declare to him plainly that He had come to him as one lost ; when the guest of Pharisees, might utterly disregard all their tradi-

tionary observances ; and when dining with those in high society, might sternly rebuke their pride and their hypocritical fastidiousness.

The relation which any of us sustains towards his fellows, is altogether different. We are but men among our fellow-men, and have no such right to assume the office of censors. It may, indeed, sometimes, be the clear duty of Christians, and especially of Christian ministers, to speak in open reproof of sin. It can never be right for them to countenance it ; and when silence would be thus justly construed, they must speak : but still the question, "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant ?" must always be a check upon their presuming to administer reproof, even when there appears to be occasion for it. Besides, it must always be borne in mind, that none of us are, as Christ was, sinless : and there is very great danger of our being zealous, even over-zealous, in denunciation of certain forms of worldliness for which we have no liking, while the spirit of worldliness holds undisputed sway in our hearts. Indeed, there is no more pitiable instance of poor human inconsistency than this. We see it in the Pharisees whom our Lord reproved. They would not dare to eat without having first washed their hands from all possible defilement of earthly

contact; they were horrified at Christ eating with publicans and sinners: and yet, this clean and decorous exterior, which they were so careful to maintain, was but the garb with which they concealed, both from themselves and others, principles of conduct hateful and even devilish in their hearts. There is inconsistency not less decided, hypocrisy not less real, in the modern professor of Christ's religion, who turns with pious horror from some proscribed form of worldly entertainment, to hoard up its cost in the coffers of insatiable covetousness; and who condemns, without admission of the least possible palliation, those whose customs may differ from the traditions of his sect, and yet is not convicted by his own conscience of the fact which is apparent to all others, that the ruling principles of his life are utterly at variance with the requirements of righteousness, mercy, and truth. We need, most certainly, to be on our guard against this inconsistency; and the fact that we are liable to it is one point in which we should never forget, that we are altogether different from Christ.

When we have made due allowance for these differences, we know of nothing else in the way of the close following of His example. We are not sinless, like Him; we have no right, as He had, to

censure all whose conduct may seem to us improper. As His disciples, we must be with Him—that is, we must permit ourselves to go where, and only where, He might go; and we must submit our hearts and lives to His principles—that is, we must allow ourselves no indulgence in anything which He would disapprove, and must earnestly endeavour to emulate all that He approves.

No one can have the least acquaintance with the New Testament Scriptures, without being aware that the state of Christian discipleship is therein plainly taught to be, in some sense, a state of separation from the world. Our Lord repeatedly declared to those whom He had chosen for disciples, in His personal ministry, that He had chosen them *out of the world;* and consequently that they were no longer of the world. He made it an indispensable condition of such discipleship, that every one should forsake all worldly kindred and possessions, and take up His cross, and come out before the world and follow Him. When He had withdrawn His bodily presence from the Church on earth, and had taken His place, where He now ever liveth to intercede for us, at the right hand of the Father in heaven, the Apostolic pastors whom His spirit inspired, insisted still, no less decidedly, on this

Christian separateness. For example, St. Paul, in the text already cited, charges the Roman converts that they should not be conformed to this world, but transformed, by the renewing of their minds. To the Corinthian Christians, He gives a similar charge, with the earnest language: "What concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of the Lord with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God, as God hath said: I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Wherefore, come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you; and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." St. James declares it to be an essential part of the Christian's duty, to keep himself "unspotted from the world." St. Peter describes it as an essential condition of the Christian state, that they who are in it "have escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." St. John makes this, as a general and unqualified Christian declaration: "We know that we are of God; and the whole world lieth in wickedness."

In perfect agreement with all this plain teaching of Holy Writ, the Church has everywhere, and in all ages, required of every candidate for admission into her fold by baptism, that he shall first make a positive and avowed renunciation of the world. Not a soul, in all the eighteen centuries of Christian history, has ever been permitted to stand as a candidate before the baptismal font, without having the question put to him : Dost thou renounce the world ? as well as the flesh and the devil ; and not one has ever received the baptismal washing, without having given to that question, explicitly and distinctly, an affirmative response.

Most unquestionably certain and clear then it is, that the Christian state is, in some sense, a state of separateness from the world.

Now, the point is, to determine precisely what that means. The example of Christ is here the true and sufficient guide.

In the first place, He has shown us that Christian separateness does not, ordinarily, require or authorise an actual withdrawal from the common duties or enjoyments of life. As He was in the world, so must His disciples be. There, for the most part, is the field, as there, for the most part, are the opportunities and instrumentalities, of their duties. We

say, *for the most part:* and we are careful to make this qualification, because it would be a fatal oversight indeed if, in professing to follow the example of Christ, one should fail to serve and imitate Him in His seasons of retirement from the scenes of active duty, to hold private, sacred communion with His Father in heaven. Woe to the professing Christian who has no such consecrated hours! Woe to him whose heart is not always attuned by such seasons of devotion! For all his active duties, for all the opportunities and instrumentalities of his life-work, the Christian must, as we have said, be in the world: and the world, for him, is just the sphere of life in which Providence has placed him. Whatever be his calling, just there is his work. There are callings or businesses which are wrong in themselves, or which necessarily involve those who engage in them in sin; but of such, it scarcely need be said, we do not speak, for it is self-evident that the Christian may not engage in them. But, in whatever honest calling any disciple, or any one seeking to be a disciple, of Christ, finds himself providentially placed,—in it, and in all the relations which it properly includes, his active energies ought, unquestionably, to be employed.

As with duties, so also with enjoyments. These

are likewise determined, in so far as they are innocent, by the Providential appointments of our lot. There are enjoyments correlative with every condition of duty. In all the relations which kindred, or neighbourhood, or friendship involves, there are sources of enjoyment which are lawful and good, and in which the Christian may participate at proper times and seasons ; and in the participation enjoy, as did the guests of the feast in Cana of Galilee, the Saviour's presence and benediction.

In what, then, consists the Christian's separation from the world ? The answer is, It consists in precisely that which, as we have seen, was the distinguishing characteristic of Christ,—viz., *unworldliness of spirit.* He was, bodily and most actively, in the world : He ate and drank with publicans and sinners, as well as with scribes and Pharisees ; but at all times, and alike with all classes, it was His meat and drink to do His heavenly Father's will.

Can every disciple be like Him in that respect ? Must he be ? Undoubtedly. " But Christ had come from heaven to do a special work ; while we are of the earth : and it is not natural for us, as it was for Him, to have affections disentangled from worldly attachments." That is true ; but remember, it was one principal and most essential part of Christ's

special work, to raise all His disciples into His own filial relationship with God. To be in His Church is to be adopted into the family of God: it is to be made members of His own Body; it is to be dead with Him unto the world, and risen again in Him unto newness of life. It is, most manifestly, inconsistent for one to be in this state, and yet be worldly in spirit. His present existence is in the world, and so His duties are there; and inasmuch as His heavenly Father has placed Him there and surrounded Him with the creations of His infinite goodness, He may, with all good conscience, have much enjoyment therein. Whether in duties or enjoyments, there cannot but be a marked *separation* in *spirit* between him and the mass of mankind who are living solely for the present world. This is their home. To it are devoted all their affections. In it they find all their enjoyments. Their only consistent motto, therefore, is: "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die."—Let us make the most of this life, indulge in all its possible sources of enjoyment; for this is all that we have any claim upon, all that we have any heart for!

The Christian—he who has been "born again"—who has been crucified with Christ unto the world, and risen again in Him unto newness of life—

surely, this is not his language, this cannot be his spirit! He is not a mere descendant of Adam; he is a redeemed and adopted child of God. He is not limited in this life to this perishing earth; he is the heir of—nay, he is even now an actual participator in—the life everlasting. His tastes, likings, affections, desires, must therefore be unworldly: they cannot, unless he is utterly false to his profession, they cannot be less than heavenly. His real and true life cannot be here, it must be "hid with Christ, in God." With this spirit he must of necessity be,—nay, to him there is no felt necessity, it is the result of the freest spiritual spontaneity that he is, as Christ was, separate from the world, even while he is in it. He must often be actually separate from mere worldliness; for much that they enjoy is positively sinful or leads to sin; and in every such scene he must openly refuse to participate. But even where this may not be required; where he may participate and enjoy the participation, there will still be something in him, in his whole tone and bearing, as there was in Christ, which must be felt by all with whom he associates, to be uncongenial with worldliness. The trifling frivolities, "the foolish jestings, which are not convenient"; the devotion to these convention-

alities and empty vanities which, in truth, though shame to say, do really constitute the essentia feature of a great part of what is called "society" in the world; it is impossible for the true Christian to sympathise with, scarcely possible for him to engage in. So then, while he has joys such as the world knows not of, and which it can neither give nor take away; it must ever be true, that the world *in its worldliness* will not sympathise with him, and will rather dislike than enjoy his companionship. In other words, the disciples of Christ, in every age, must be willing to accept, as one of the conditions of faithful discipleship, that which our Lord forewarned His first followers of, when He declared to them, "If ye were *of the world*, the world would love his own; but, *because ye are not of the world, therefore the world hateth you.*" The professing Christian who does not know, in his own experience, what this means, has very decided reason to fear that he has only the form of godliness, not the power thereof.

This being true, how significant it is that the practical portion of the first inspired Christian Epistle opens with a precept for the avoidance of worldly conformity!—significant, surely, as involving a first principle, and setting its mark as a funda-

mental and indispensable distinction between those who are Christians and those who are not. "Be not conformed to this world," or, as it is rendered more exactly in the Revised Version—"Be not fashioned according to this world." How significant likewise is the fact that the inspired antithesis with which the Apostle completes the precept is, "but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind!" "Transformed by *the renewing of your mind.*" Ah! that is the real secret of the Christian, as distinguished from the worldly, character. It is not, except where there are agencies positively sinful and influences positively wrong, that there should or can be an actual separation. The outward system in which our lot is cast, is providentially ordered to be the sphere of our ordinary life-work, and we are not called to leave it for any mere ideal state; but the call is to be inwardly as estranged from the evil that cleaves to the system around us, as if we were not of it. "I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world; but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil." The truth is, that there is no way by which this separating and refining effect can be effectually wrought in any of us, but by that renewing of our minds which comes from close, personal communion with that Holy One,

who, when on earth in our flesh, could truly say of Himself, "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me." Without the renewal of mind which is begotten in just this personal communion with Christ, there will inevitably be the lack of a genuine Christian character, which cannot be counteracted or counterbalanced by any merely professional separation from anything that we may like to stigmatise as the world.

On the other hand, if this be true of us, then we understand how to apply the precept, "Be not fashioned according to the world"; for we do not look to the world as our model or our rule. We have been ransomed from thraldom to it; we have renounced its sway and repudiated its authority. Our example is a single holy one. Our rule of life is inspired by His Spirit. Our daily walk is in communion with Him. In that communion we are constantly being more and more transformed; so that all our habits of thought and feeling are in the line of divine demonstration, proving, more and more clearly, and more and more satisfactorily to ourselves, and to the convincing of others, what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.

CHAPTER XIX.

CHRISTIAN COMFORT.

"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."—2 CORINTHIANS i. 3, 4.

COMFORT has its office only in a world like ours, of mingled sorrow and hope. It has no place in heaven; for it is not needed there, where felicity is perfect. It has, more emphatically, no place in hell; for in the desperation of lost spirits there is no hope to which it can point. Only here in this world, saddened by sin yet not excluded from the hope of redemption, is comfort needed, or even possible.

Here it is needed, sooner or later, and from one cause or another, by us all. It is a very old and trite, but not less true saying, that "Man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward." "More or less, we all have, we all must have, our trials of pain and sorrow. If any seem to be exempt, being permitted for years to go on in the world's sunshine, it is only that troubles, when they come, should fall heavier." Sooner or later we all need comfort.

As we all need it, we are likewise capable of it. We have an instinctive yearning for it, a conscious-

ness, as it were, that we are somehow entitled to it and ought to receive it. Any one who has had trial knows this by experience. At such a time, there is in the quivering sensibilities an instinctive feeling after comfort, just as the fibres of plants, in a dark place, feel for the light. With this consciousness of the need of comfort there is an involuntary apprehension of our capacity for it, and a trust, indistinct it may be, but real, that it exists somewhere for us. This is all that keeps us from utter desperation,—all that holds us up from the condition of devils, who have no hope.

While comfort is thus needed in our world, and adapted to it, it is at the same time most assuredly true that this grace is something which is not of this world, which has its root nowhere in the soil of our fallen earth.

Let us apprehend distinctly what comfort implies. Obviously, it is called for, and can exercise its functions, only where there is sorrow. Then its office is, neither to make light of the trial, to represent it as in any way less than it really is, nor yet to deaden or blunt our natural sensibilities. It is not a jester, laughing at calamity ; nor a sophist, arguing against its power ; nor yet is it an opiate, to stupefy, or an intoxicating draught, to

inflame with delirium the faculties of the afflicted. But, recognising all the sorrowfulness of the trial, holding it and seeing it in its true light, recognising also and sacredly respecting all our sensibility to suffering, the work of comfort is to support us—not, as we have said, to stupefy or amuse, but *to support*; according to its literal signification, *to make us strong*,—to enable us, that is, to stand up and look steadily at our trial, to measure, with calm sadness, its height, and breadth, and length, and depth; and yet, bear up, and go forth again to life's duties, stronger, manlier, nobler, better, than we were before. This is comfort.

Now, we say, this cannot be derived from any mere earthly source.

Where on earth will you seek for it? Shall it be in any system of human philosophy? Philosophy—that is, the result of human speculations and reasonings. But of what avail are reasonings, however ingenious, in real sorrow? Come to the sorrowing heart, every nerve of which is quivering with anguish, and present your reasonings for its consideration! The friends of Job tried that, in his hour of sorrow; and the answer which they wrung from him was but this: "Miserable comforters are ye all." Their reasoning was ingenious,

their conclusions plausible, and, for the most part, true enough in the abstract; but what availed all this to comfort him? His sorrow was real. He felt that; and it was not diminished in the least by any theoretical explanation of its origin or its nature. One word or look of real sympathy was worth more than all the demonstrations of reason. The All-merciful and All-wise Saviour recognised and conformed to this when He met the bereaved and weeping sisters of Lazarus, and attempted no reasoning, but simply wept with them, and gave them the precious promise of the Resurrection. Oh no; philosophy is well enough, when we are in a mood for its abstractions. It occupies the thoughts, and so interests the attention, of the speculative; it affords a sort of satisfaction to the curious; it sometimes helps to relieve perplexity in earnest minds; but *it cannot comfort.* It contains no balm of consolation which has any virtue to heal the wound or still the pain of real sorow.

Turning from philosophy, shall we look for the elements of comfort in the excitements and changes of the world: in the engrossing exactions of its business, or the intoxicating whirl of its amusements? It is not to be denied that these have a certain power to counteract the agonising force of

affliction. After the shock of sorrow is over—the first great shock, that breaks up the very foundations of life, and convulses the soul with unappeasable anguish—if one betake himself with resolute determination to life's business, he may succeed (he will be not unlikely to succeed) in so engrossing his thoughts in its cares as to exclude the keen remembrance of his trial; or, if he rush into the whirl of the world's amusements, it is possible that he may become so intoxicated as, for the time, to lose his consciousness of it or his sensibility to it: and, even in the natural flow of time itself, there are soothing influences, wearing off the keenness of recollection and softening the impression of sorrow; so that Time has been called, not untruly in this sense, the All-healer.

But *comfort* is surely something higher and better than all this. To be stupefied or delirious, to be made oblivious or intoxicatedly excited, is not to be made *strong*. Nay, these opiates or stimulants can have no other permanent effect than to debilitate. The heart will carry its heavy burden into the intensest engrossments of business; and its sinking weight will be felt depressing continually, and, at times, utterly crushing. The feverish excitement of amusement is sure to have its terrible

reactions; and even the steady flow of Time has its soothing effect, only as it lulls us into partial forgetfulness.

What we need is not merely this, but an increase of strength: strength to bear our burden, and, in the bearing of it, to accept all our responsibilities and discharge all our duties with a spirit purified, exalted, and ennobled. That is, to be *comforted.*

Where, then, is the sorrowing one to find this?

The Christian answer is: By coming directly to the mercy-seat and submitting unreservedly to the disposition of divine grace. Not, let it be observed, by *theorising* about the principles or methods of the divine government (that is only another form of philosophising, even though our theories be perfectly correct and even scriptural); but, by *coming directly unto Him* as the all-sufficient Author and Sustainer of our existence,—the God of all comfort, the Father of mercies, and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ: looking up in a childlike spirit unto Him, recognising the relation which we sustain towards Him, apprehending the exceeding great and precious promises of His Gospel, and uttering the feelings and desires of the burdened spirit in language such as this: "My Father, Thou hast laid this great grief upon me; I know that Thou art

infinitely wise and good; and I am weak—oh, how weak and helpless, and short-sighted, and sinful! But I am Thy child: Thou hast made me and placed me here, and given me whatsoever I have. Thou knowest my frame: Thou hast a perfect knowledge of my infirmities and my needs. Thou hast given the plainest assurances that Thou designest only my best good in the dispensations of affliction. And now, O Father, guide and sustain me. Teach me by Thy good Spirit what to do and be: how to receive, to bear, and comport myself in this great trial, so that it may accomplish in me that effect which Thou designest that it should work. I submit myself implicitly to Thee. I am ready to be whatever Thou wouldest have me. Only vouchsafe unto me the comfort of Thy grace, and bring me at last to the true end of my life."

One who, in trouble of any nature whatsoever, shall thus go and prostrate himself at the divine mercy-seat, and shall continue in the spirit of such supplication, will most assuredly know what it is *to be comforted*, and that even so that, without any diminished sensibility to his loss, he will be able to say with the Psalmist,—"It is good for me that I have been afflicted."

It may not be easy to tell precisely how this

result will be attained, by what process the comfort will come to him and be apprehended by him; because this depends on the adaptations of divine grace to individual circumstances and characteristics: but there are certain steps in it and elements of it which may be indicated. In the first place, as the dark clouds with which the sorrowful one is overshadowed begin to lift a little, there will dawn upon him *a new aspect of life.* Before affliction, the world and our life in it seem to be so exactly adapted to each other as to make it difficult, indeed scarcely possible, for us to realise that the interests and destiny of the one are not in common with those of the other. Life and the world move forward together naturally, as things of course; and our natural inclinations lead us to take their concurrence for granted, as if it had always been and always would continue to be so. The effect on our character is, obviously, to make us light-hearted, and, not so obviously but with scarcely less certainty, to make us unreflecting and unfeeling. True, it is a pleasant thing to look sometimes upon those who have never been afflicted. "We look with a smile of interest upon the smooth brow and open countenance, and our hearts thrill within us at the ready laugh or the piercing

glance. There is a buoyancy and freshness of mind in those who have never suffered, which is beautiful. It befits an angel; it befits very young persons and children, who have never been delivered over to their three great enemies."* But in men and women, soiled more or less with sins, this lightness of spirits is apt to degenerate into want of feeling, and beget a hard and selfish temper. Such persons, as Mr. Newman truly says in a sermon from which we have just been quoting, are "like spoiled children," feeling and acting as if everything must, as a matter of course, "give way to their own wishes and conveniences." Then all the good gifts of God's bounty, all the delights of the eye and the soul, are appropriated and used without a thought of thankfulness for their possession or question as to the title of their tenure.

Here it is that affliction brings to us a revelation. It discloses terrible breaks and disharmonies in the world's life. It puts antagonisms between our interests and its interests: makes us feel that we are really in our nature separate from it. Then, when the affliction is sanctified by divine grace, we begin to understand that our true life is really much higher than its life. We begin to feel that

* J. H. Newman, Par. Sermons, vol. ii., p. 381.

we are here, not merely to be the world's admirers or the world's slaves, but that we may be the world's conquerors. We see then, as we have never seen before, both the greatness and the littleness of our mortal state:—greatness, in that it is probationary to immortal exaltation and blessedness; but littleness, in the unreal and unsubstantial elements of its present earthly condition.

With this revelation of life's purposes and destination, God's grace leads the sorrowful spirit which it sanctifies to an apprehension, more or less distinct and vivid, of the fearful mystery of sin. Perhaps it is not too much to say that affliction, in some form or another, is indispensably necessary to put sin before us, at least in some of its aspects, in a true light. In relation to God, the most favoured children of innocence may have a sense of its exceeding sinfulness and shrink from its evil; but *the hatefulness* of sin is learned nowhere so well as in the school of affliction. The terrible facts which then confront us, and the wretchedness in which they involve us, are unaccountable save as sin's consequences. They would drive us into atheism, into the denial that there is any God, or else into the belief that He is a fiend, if they were not traceable to sin, and if sin were not felt and known

to be in opposition to His nature and will. The mystery is fearful still; but when this much has come to be apprehended, its true effect is to beget a real abhorrence of sinfulness, and then, humiliation and repentance and self-distrust, because of our felt participation in it. Then comes the welcome annunciation of the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Then, as rays of light in the dark valley of the shadow of death are to the troubled spirit, such assurances and promises by Him as these :—"God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "I am the Resurrection and the Life." "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "God doth not willingly afflict or grieve the children of men, but, like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him." "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him. For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. . . . . We have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence : shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they, verily, for a

few days chastened us after their own pleasure ; but He, for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness. Now, no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous ; nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees ; and make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way ; but let it rather be healed. Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."

Oh, these are indeed accents of most precious comfort to the sorrowful spirit ! and when they are heard with the ear and received into the heart of faith, there is light in the darkness. The hands which hung down are lifted up ; the feeble knees receive strength ; and the trial ceases to be a burden. It is borne still : but it is borne as birds bear their wings, and he who bears it goes forth with it, and is raised by it into that true life, which, though it be in the world, is not of it,—though it be among the children of men, is hid with Christ in God.

Blessed are the mourners who are thus comforted ! Tribulation worketh patience in them ; and patience, experience ; and experience, hope ; and hope maketh

not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in their hearts, by the Holy Ghost which is given unto them. Being thus comforted of God, they are made in turn able to comfort others also. They are made like Christ in sympathy, by their participation in His sufferings. So their experience, with its results, finds a true expression in the language of the Apostle: "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."

CHAPTER XX.

THE CHRISTIAN SENSE OF HEAVENLY CITIZENSHIP.

Our conversation is in heaven."—PHILIPPIANS iii. 2.

THE word which is here translated *conversation* would be rendered more exactly, as it is in the Revised Version, by *citizenship*: meaning the state and corresponding conduct of citizens. The truth which the Apostle here declares is, that the Christian state is, even here and now while still in the life of earth, a heavenly state, so that all who are truly members of it are thereby invested, not only with a presumptive title to a heavenly inheritance, but also with present actual citizenship in the heavenly world.

This is emphatically a New Testament truth. We find it first, distinctly and repeatedly, in the personal teachings of our Lord. Indeed, the assertion of it and of its bearing on human duty and destiny, might be said to have been the leading and most characteristic topic of His personal teachings. No phrase was more common in His mouth than that of "the kingdom of Heaven"; and to explain what He meant by it, and illustrate it, was the object

of the greater part of His parables. They began almost uniformly with the sentence: "The kingdom of Heaven," or, "of God, is like,"—and then follows the illustration. When we carefully consider these parables, we find that they relate, not at least primarily, as we might anticipate, to the future state, nor yet to the reign of God in the celestial world, but to the present life as organised and regulated in the Christian dispensation. For instance, in the first parable—that of "the Sower"—it is clear that the conditions are found and fulfilled only in life on earth. It is only here that the preaching of the Gospel is to fall, as seed, on different kinds of soil; as, indeed, it is only here, so far as we know, that the Gospel is to be preached at all. So with the several parables which show the nature and legitimate work of the Christian Church,—as, for instance, that of "the Mustard Seed," "the Drawnet," "the Marriage of the King's Son," "the Steward," "the Unmerciful Servant," "the Vineyard," and "the Ten Virgins,"—it is obvious that the intended reference was to the conditions and responsibilities which belong to the present life. These all begin with the phrase—"The kingdom of Heaven is like." We observe also that when, in a few instances,—as in the parables of

"Dives and Lazarus," or, "the Stewardship and Final Reckoning,"—the divine government is represented as the administration of eternal justice determining human destinies beyond this life, the same phrase is used as applicable to both states alike; plainly implying that they were considered to be, not different or separate, but essentially one and the same. To precisely the same effect are many of our Lord's direct practical teachings; as, for instance, that in which He bids us to "seek first the kingdom of God," and to "lay up" our "treasures in heaven, that" our "hearts may be there also."

A truth so characteristic in the teachings of the Master could not but have made a specially strong impression on His disciples. Accordingly, we find it in the Epistles throughout as a recognised premise of Christian argument and exhortation. For example, when St. Paul, in writing to the Corinthians, speaks incidentally of his own personal labours and trials in the ministry, he refers to the motives by which he was led to undertake such a ministry and was sustained in the endurance of its trials. And the leading motive thus indicated was drawn from the recognition of precisely this truth: "We look," he says, "not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the

things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal. For we know that, if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Again, in writing to the Ephesians, he still more clearly speaks of this heavenly citizenship as an unquestionable prerogative of the present Christian state: "God, which is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved,) and hath raised us up together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. . . . Now, therefore, ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God." So, when exhorting the Colossian converts to heavenly-mindedness, he does not hesitate to give them the motive in the recognition of this truth as a simple unquestionable fact: "For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." So, in commending the past faithfulness and urging on the higher zeal of the Hebrew converts, he tells them: "Ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and enduring substance." Subsequently he enlarges on this with

magnificent eloquence: "For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, and unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; . . . but ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and Church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant, and to the Blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than that of Abel."

In all such passages—and these are but specimens of texts to the same effect in the Epistles throughout—it is very clear that this thought of our present actual citizenship in the heavenly world was in the mind of the inspired writers, and the truth of it was recognised as a fundamental prerogative of the Christian state.

We are all familiar with this scriptural language, as we have been all our lives accustomed to read and hear it: but it is much to be feared that this very familiarity may be in its effect with us, as that of the familiarity of "a thrice-told tale," only to have dulled our apprehension of its real meaning

and purpose, and to make it therefore the more needful for us to fix our attention renewedly upon it, and put ourselves, with quickened interest, to asking, what it does, in very truth, mean for us and require of us?

To this question we cannot get the true answer, without a clear understanding and acceptance of the relative state and condition of this world, as it is represented in the Scriptures of Revelation. The truth for us on this point is, that this world in which we have our present life is not a product of mere chance, or of impersonal force, but a veritable part of the creation of Almighty God; that as such, it was at first created, and was intended to be a legitimately constituted province of His universal dominion; and man, when made its lord and master, was so made and placed by His appointment and under the delegated conditions of His righteous sovereignty.

In the fall through sin, there was a violation of these conditions on man's part, and, in consequence, the harmony and blissful tranquillity of the life of earth was broken up; and disorder, discontent, and final death became our common lot.

From the beginning to the end of His ministry, our Lord declared it to be His sole purpose to

save the world from this wretchedness and its eternal consequences. To this end He declared, plainly and repeatedly, He came into the world: that, having been eternally the only begotten Son of the Almighty Father in heaven, He had condescended to incarnation in our human life, and fulfilled its righteous obligations even under the disabilities and amid the disharmonies of its fallen condition. The organisation of His Church, then, was the organisation of a *redeemed* body; an Ecclesia, or corporate assembly, reclaimed from rebellion, and brought back into original allegiance with more than the original endowment of gracious protection and blessing. Therefore Christ was accustomed to say to His personal disciples, "Ye are not of the world, even as I am not of the world," and therefore, the very first, fundamental, and most characteristic prerogative of the Christian life was understood, from the beginning of Christian history, to be that of a real title to heavenly citizenship. A real title, we say, by which we mean that the heavenly citizenship was understood and certified to be, not an imaginary satisfaction of pious aspiration or hope, but a veritable prerogative of the actual life. Nor was there any invalidation of this title, by the mere circumstance that life was still on earth, any more

than the prerogatives and rights of citizenship in relation to an earthly kingdom are invalidated by residence in a province of the kingdom. The provincial subject is, in every respect, as truly a subject, and as fully entitled to citizen's rights and prerogatives, as if he were a resident of the capital or even a dweller in the very palace of the king.

Such, then is, in very truth, our heavenly citizenship in the Christian state: and so without any sense of unreality, and without any thought of necessary qualification by concession to pious sentiment, may we—all of us who are within the terms of the Christian covenant, and honestly aiming to keep our daily life in loyal subjection to its conditions,—take up as our own this claim of the apostle, and say with him, and with the fulness of his meaning: "Our conversation—our citizenship—is, even here and now in Heaven."

This, as a real prerogative, involves real and very important consequences. It verifies, in the first place, our right to participation in heavenly privileges and graces. Being regenerated in Christ, the Son of God, we have our life, and that really and in the truest possible sense, *in* Him, and His Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are sons of

God. While we are living here, Christ liveth in us ; and in all the struggles and difficulties, amid all the disabilities and disappointments, and under all the changes and chances, of our earthly lot, our life is truly hid with Christ in God. Our true life, then, is independent of our earthly circumstances. These have their uses as the conditions of our present tenancy and the measure of our responsibilities in present trust ; but neither wealth nor poverty, nor any other condition of the life of earth, determines the rank or estate of any one before God, and as assigned and estimated in the heavenly sphere. Therefore, in a true realisation of the prerogatives of our Christian citizenship, we can say, with the apostolic estimation of life's fortunes, whether of good or ill, " None of these things move me " ; and may count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord.

Let it be distinctly understood that this is no fantasy of pious sentiment. It is a real prerogative of the Christian state ; and, if we claim to be Christians, to have our life regulated by Christian principles and animated by Christian faith and hope, it is ours and should be claimed and enjoyed by every one of us in our personal sphere and relations. The early Christians, as we have seen, thought

much of it, and in its realisation counted themselves but strangers and pilgrims in the world, knowing that they had in heaven a far better and enduring inheritance. It was but natural that they should have been almost dazzled by the first flashes of so glorious a revelation as that of the heavenly world which had then just been made in the Resurrection and Ascension of Christ ; and their temptation was to undervalue the present world in comparison with the heavenly inheritance. This temptation, we, in our later age and generation, have long since passed ; and the revelation, being old and familiar, has no longer the power of a fresh inspiration, and can be valued and felt effectively only as we bring our selves to realise its truth.

This, then, is a point for real Christian aim and effort. We are to try to remember, and be willing to recognise and accept the fact, that this world is not our home ; to try to think, and be willing to think, of the life here as not our true life ; to set our affections and our hopes on heaven and heavenly things : to think of the world as the sphere of duty, the place of daily work, the allotted trial ground and field of present probation, but, in the long run and for enduring purposes, only as a thoroughfare whereon we are pilgrims and strangers, being assured

that our true inheritance is above, and our most veritable citizenship is that of heaven.

There is almost no circumstance or condition of life in which the realisation of this truth will not affect our feelings by an entire change in our standard of estimation. One or two illustrations may be suggested in conclusion.

There are Providential dispensations which must come sooner or later to every one of us—the dispensations of bereavement, when those who have been nearest and dearest to us are taken away, and we are made to know and feel the sadness of a longing for "the touch of a vanished hand, and the sound of a voice that is still": sooner or later, we say, these must come to every one of us; and then, oh! the difference, the immeasurable difference, between a vague, indetermined, hopeless sense of bereavement, with only the blackness of darkness into which we cannot peer before us,—what an infinite difference between this and a well-grounded hope and assured faith that the Redeemer liveth, and that they who are no longer here are in blissful rest with Him! This assurance can come from no mere spasmodic faith: it must be rooted in an assured, habitual conviction of our heavenly citizenship.

Finally, in our own individual experiences, if we

are not cut off by a stroke of divine Providence, we must all know what it is to be, and to feel that we are growing old. It has long ago been said to be a very rare, and yet very desirable achievement, to grow old gracefully. We know of but one way to do that. Certainly not, in growing old reluctantly or unwillingly, with no acceptance of the fact except in submission to inevitable destiny and with a constant effort, the more desperate as it is proved to be impotent, to shrink back from the ever-nearing goal; there is nothing graceful or admirable, though, alas! how much that is common, in growing old in that wise. But there is an altogether different ideal. Let advancing age be but the later stages in the course which has from the first been deemed only a short journey; let the end be that which has always been regarded as our home; and surely, however pleasant or attractive we may have found the way to be, and however much of responsibility may seem to argue for our continuance in it, the advancing stages will be thankfully welcomed and the end to which they bear us looked forward to with a constant brightening of anticipation, as that of the true and most desirable consummation. And when at last, the end is reached, and death comes to such an one, he can lie down and sleep without a

single shudder of dread or regret; not only with the serenity of

> "One who wraps the drapery of his couch
> About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams";

but with the tranquillity of celestial faith and hope, as one who sees heaven already open, and hears with no misgiving, no doubt, the voice of his lifelong-trusted Redeemer, saying unto him, "Come, ye blessed of My Father, receive the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world."

Who would not desire this blissful consummation? It may be attained by every one; but only through a life whose animating and sustaining principle is that faith which is "the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen."

CHAPTER XXI.

THE CHRISTIAN SENSE OF SPIRITUAL COMPANIONSHIP.

"Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us."—HEBREWS xii. 1.

THIS passage can hardly fail to strike even the most casual reader as a beautifully figurative exhortation to Christian patience and perseverance: but we do not see half its beauty or feel half its force, until we study it carefully in connection with the context. We must read the preceding chapter until we have caught its spirit and succeeded in bringing vividly before us the host of worthies whose faith the Apostle commemorates. We must see them as he saw them, forming, through successive generations from Abel down, the great company of the faithful; treading each in the footsteps of the others, on to that heavenly country which, by faith, in common they sought. Then, we are to conceive of them as gathered together, even as drops of water are gathered, into one immense cloud. Descending from the upper heavens and floating on the air, they hover over the Christian race-ground,—a "cloud of witnesses" to the runners there,—witnesses both of them and to them, ani-

mating by their presence as spectators, and holding out the highest encouragement, by testifying to the practicability of the race and the certainty of its reward.

Then we are to place ourselves on the course, and conceive of the Apostle as encouraging us on when we begin to grow faint and weary, by pointing to this immense concourse of the faithful, and bidding us catch inspiration from their presence. "Wherefore," he says, "seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us."

The mighty host of the saints of God that in every age, even from the beginning of the world, have run their race and entered into their rest, are thus represented as witnesses of our present Christian labours and trials,—witnesses, not only to see how we act our part, but also to give us, by their presence and their testimony, sustaining power to act it well.

In apprehending this as the import of the passage, it must be obvious to every one, that the relations of the Christian life as here portrayed, are infinitely higher and more extensive than we are apt to con-

ceive while standing on the low level of modern Christianity. The conceptions here all run out in mere individualism. We are accustomed to hear it stated as a self-evident truth, an axiom which is entitled to universal acceptation, that religion is a matter which rests solely between every individual man and his God. Salvation, in our modern Gospel, is a strictly personal work and privilege: so absolutely personal, that every man who will attend to it is held bound to take precisely such a course, and comply exactly with such terms, as if he were the only person in the world and it were provided for himself alone. Thus we have lost sight of all corporate powers and relations, and run the Christian race as if we were alone in it; as if there were no competitors and no spectators. So Christianity, which was designed to bind the human family together,—making all its members, in the strictest sense members of one Body,—has, in fact, come to be regarded as a universal disintegrator, separating every man from his brother-man and from the race, and leaving each one to stand or fall, not only on his own individual responsibility, but by his own individual strength or weakness.

Far different from this was the ideal of the Christian life which animated the Apostles and their

converts, the primitive disciples. They never spoke, and seem never for a moment to have thought, of themselves as standing alone. Their Christian life was ever felt to be the life of members in a body: and so they were bound, every one to every other one, and through every one to the whole, by relationships as intimate and as vital as those which connect the members of a living body with each other, and all together with their common head. They had "one faith, one Lord, one baptism"; and their trials and their joys, their dangers and sufferings, their hopes and fears, their affections and sympathies, all were, and were held by them, as common. If one member suffered, all suffered: if one rejoiced, it brought joy to all. Not only so: not only did they thus hold themselves as one with each other; but also as one with all the saints of God in all time. They could look back on the long line of the faithful, through all the successive ages, up to the very infancy of our race, and recognise in each one an elder brother, preceding them in the order of time, but still, not without them made perfect; and, therefore, not indifferent to, not uninterested in, their endeavours for the Christian goal. Abel and Enoch, Noah and Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and Joseph and Moses, and the thousands of others

of whom the world was not worthy, and who, through faith, counted themselves, even while here, as citizens of another country, even an heavenly ;—to all these they felt themselves united, being partakers with them of the same spirit of faith, having a like portion on earth, bound to the exercise of a like patience in enduring its trials, and a like unwavering perseverance in pressing on to that "better country" which was revealed as, to all alike, their eternal home.

It was under the influence of this feeling, and with the most vivid impression of this idea, that the Apostle wrote ; and never shall we have a true sense of our position and heritage as Christians until we realise this truth.

We are not left to stand alone. Though we may seem to be so in our day and generation ; though the world around us knows nothing of our spiritual conflicts, and cares as little for them ; though even among those who profess with us the Christian faith, there may be but little apparent realisation of the blessed intimacies of Christian communion ; though Christian principles, and feelings, and motives, even among these, may often be misunderstood and misjudged ;—still we are not alone. We have true sympathisers. An innumerable company is about

us, invisible indeed to our eyes of sense, but not on that account less really present. For "we are come unto Mount Zion and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and Church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant." By this "great cloud of witnesses" are we encompassed, and they are deeply interested in our progress. We are needed to fill up the ranks of the company they form; for "without us," saith the Apostle, "they are not made perfect."

All the saints of the elder dispensation are there: patriarchs, prophets, kings, and priests; and to them are joined the spirits of the Christian just: apostles, confessors, the noble army of martyrs, and the great company of the faithful; and to these, the innumerable multitude of the angelic hosts; and Christ above all. These are our witnesses: all these, looking with most intense interest upon us, watching our progress, and sympathising in all our conflicts and triumphs. All *these*—do we say? Nay, may we not, must we not, in conformity to the unequivocal declaration of the Apostle, say rather,

all are *here?* here, in wonderful nearness to us and most intimate communion with us!

God is not afar off. He compasseth our path and our lying down, and spieth out all our ways. In Him we live, move, and have our being; and He is never far from every one of us.

Christ is not afar off. Though He hath ascended into the heavens—though, therefore, in the natural body, He is no longer on earth—yet is He still here: here, by spiritual presence always in His Church; here, in our midst whenever two or three are gathered together in His name; here, by the tokens of His own appointed and divinely quickened Sacraments; here, in our hearts, if we faithfully receive these Sacraments and truly love Him: for this is His own promise: "I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to you." The world seeth me no more, but ye see me; because I live, ye shall live also. If a man love me he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."

The holy angels are not afar off. "Are they not all ministering spirits *sent forth* to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation?" Being thus sent forth, have we not the certain assurance that "the angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that

fear Him"? Has He not promised to give His angels charge over us to keep us in all our ways, and in their hands to bear us up, lest we dash our foot against a stone?

Surely, then, it is true that the world of spiritual beings is not separated from us by the existence of mere material space. It is not away in some far distant locality; but, in some real though incomprehensible sense, independently of space, it is even here; and we, in so far as we are spiritual, are in it, and with its inhabitants may and do hold most intimate communion.

It is, we are quite aware, impossible to insist on this truth now, without danger of being thought to countenance a very gross modern delusion. But no counterfeit of any truth should ever be allowed by its currency to displace the truth itself; and, in this case, we believe the currency of the counterfeit is really attributable to the fact that the revealed truth had been lost sight of, and there was a felt want of it and craving for it. It is impossible for a people, thinking and feeling in even a nominal Christian atmosphere, to rest finally, and be satisfied with resting, in bare materialism; to come deliberately and consciously to the conclusion that the only world in the universe is this gross earth, and

the only beings those that are constituted with material and animal natures, such as we see here around us.

There is a spirit in man; and, however it be degraded, however blinded, however besotted, it cannot be brought so low as to lose all consciousness of its superiority to the mere animal nature, and of its capacity for participation in something higher than the mere animal life. Therefore, when our modern nominally Christian civilisation had resulted in almost universal Sadducism ; when, with the Bible in our hands and the Creed on our lips, there was really no faith in the veritable existence of angels or of spirits, scarcely any real faith in the existence of God, save as the subject of a dogma or the symbol of material force, then we were ready for any form of spiritual delusion, and disposed to clutch with the blind eagerness of drowning men at anything which presented itself as evidence of spiritual existences. That it was possible to have descended so low, to have found the reputed evidence in so contemptible a form as it did actually assume, and was actually laid hold of in the development of our modern infidelity, no one could have anticipated or been able beforehand to have believed. But this only serves to show the more clearly how real was

the felt want of spiritual faith; and therefore proves the more strongly the importance of clearly asserting, and clinging, in this as in all other respects, to the truth as it is revealed in the Gospel of Christ, the only revelation in which life and immortality are brought to light.

Therefore, we have no fear in propounding, as an unquestionable truth of this revelation, that earthly natures are not the only natures with which we hold converse: that there is, most certainly, another world, besides this gross material world which we see around us, and that we are participators in another life beside that of its mere animal existence.

How it is that the great world of spiritual beings is around us and present with us, without the conditions of space, we cannot, of course, understand. Let us remember that we can no more understand how it is that our own spiritual nature is present in or with our bodily nature; and, nevertheless, we are as clearly assured of the real present existence of the one as of the other.

We know that God, the infinite Being, who is the Author and Sustainer of all other beings, is a spirit; and doth not suffer Himself to be apprehended by any of our bodily organs: He is neither seen, nor felt, nor heard; and yet He is ever present

with us, present even here and now, present wherever we may go and be.

The angels which are His ministering servants, thousands of thousands and ten thousand times ten thousand in number, they too are spirits, and therefore unapprehensible by our bodily senses—neither seen, nor heard, nor felt ;—but they too are really present : present even here, encamping round about us, holding us up when we are about to fall, ministering to our spiritual wants and rejoicing over us and with us when we turn from the world to God.

And "the spirits of just men made perfect,"—they too, being freed from the body, are no longer tangible or visible ; they have no longer connection with or interest in the things of time and sense : at rest in Christ they are perfectly free from all earthly disquietudes, and in the blissfulness of spiritual communion they are infinitely above all the conditions and modes of material intercourse ; but, as the Apostle plainly teaches, they too are still participators with us in all the sympathies and affections of the spiritual life, and have a real interest in all our spiritual trials and triumphs. A veil of flesh and sense interposes between us and them : we cannot put aside or penetrate that veil by any material instrumentalities ; we cannot hold converse

with them any otherwise than by spiritual communion through Christ, the one Mediator and the common Head; but it is, nevertheless, true and certain, that they are actually associated, by bonds of spiritual communion, most intimately with us. Doubtless, if the fleshly veil were removed, if our spiritual eye could exercise its faculty without earthly impediment, we should see, as Jacob saw, angels of God ascending and descending the ladder that joins heaven and earth. If our eyes could be opened, as the eyes of the servant of Elisha were opened, we should see ourselves, even now, to be standing, as he stood, "under the mountain of the Lord of hosts, and horses and chariots of fire round about." If we could look upon the essential realities of existence we should see that all the material things, with which we are now conversant by our corporeal organs, are nothing more than signs and tokens—that the whole material world is only a sort of sacrament, an outward and visible sign of inward and spiritual life.

The time will come when our lips will be thus opened, and these wonders revealed: when all that we see now will fade away before those brighter splendours that lie hid beneath; when the objects that are cognisable by the eye of sense shall disappear,

as earthly objects vanish in the declining light of an expiring earthly day; and the glorious realities of the spiritual world shall burst upon us, as the canopy of heaven, with its myriads of starry worlds, comes into sight when the garish light of an earthly day is extinguished.

Meanwhile, seeing we know these things by faith, it is most reasonable, right, and our bounden duty that we should walk by faith, not by sight; and our faith should be to us, in very deed, the substance of the things hoped for, and the evidence of the things not seen. Many eyes are upon us; many hearts are beating for us. In God we live, move, and have our being. His angels are our protectors and guardians. His saints are our exemplars and witnesses. They have run the same race that we are running; been opposed by the same obstacles; tried by the same temptations; withstood by the same foes. In them all they have overcome and conquered. Now they have entered into their rest, a blissful rest in Christ their ever vital Head. He is our Head too, and we with them are members together of one body in Him. Therefore they are interested in us still. Therefore they commune with us still. Therefore they count themselves as "without us, not made perfect."

Oh, what high honour shall we esteem it to be in the Christian state, if we truly believe and realise this! How it ennobles us! How it raises us above the changes and chances of the earthly state! How it raises us above the sway of carnal lusts and affections! How can we be dispirited or disloyal; how can there be anything in us that is base or sordid; how, anything that is not honourable and pure, when we know that we are moving in such noble company and are surrounded by so holy, even by heavenly associates? Wherefore, we may well heed this truth as one of the very highest practical import:—"Seeing we are encompassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us; looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith; who, for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down for ever at the right hand of God."

CHAPTER XXII.

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN HUMAN CHARACTER.

"The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, or whither it goeth : so is every one that is born of the Spirit."—ST. JOHN iii. 8.

IT was in a quiet hour of the night when Nicodemus, a Jewish rabbi, came to our Lord as an earnest inquirer; and it is altogether probable, if not quite certain, that, in the solemn hush of that late hour, the low moaning of the wind as it swept through the narrow streets of the city, was the only sound that fell on the ear. In this, as His manner was, our Lord finds the illustration of the truth which He was seeking to inculcate. He had been speaking to the Jewish inquirer of the necessity of the new birth for living membership in His kingdom: a birth, not as into the natural state, of the flesh; but, as into the sphere of spiritual being, of the Spirit who is the author and giver of life. The inquirer, who, though a Jewish rabbi, seems to have been singularly ignorant of religious truth, had asked, How can it be? when the sound of the evening breeze was heard; and, at once, our Lord refers to it as a most apt illustration: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the

sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

In our consideration of these significant words we must not miss the precise point of the illustration. The first impression would be, that the comparison was between the *indeterminateness*—the apparent capriciousness and independence of man's foreknowledge or control—in the movement of the wind and the Spirit. But then the simile would have been carried through naturally and directly: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and . . . thou canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth: so the Spirit moves in ways that are beyond human knowledge or determination." This is not what our Lord did say in fact. The sentence as uttered by Him has an unexpected turn in the last clause: it reads not, "even so is the Spirit," or "so are the movements of the Spirit;" but, "so is every one that is born of the Spirit." The point of the comparison is, therefore, not in the apparent capriciousness of the wind and the Spirit: though both are indeed independent of our previous determination; but it is *in the demonstrable proof, which both alike afford, of the presence and operation of unseen power.* Nicodemus was reminded

that the difficulty in which his faith was halting, was a difficulty equally in the realm of nature as of grace ; that even the commonest natural agency was something that he could not see and never had seen. Yet there were to him demonstrable proofs of its existence and its vital power, in certain effects which were unquestionably apparent and which could not be accounted for except by such agency. Even so, he was bidden to remember, there are effects in the realm of spiritual being ; there are, in human character, gracious virtues which are unquestionable fruits of the Spirit of goodness ; and, therefore, that in every one whose life abounded in such grace, and brought forth such fruit, there was proof, as unquestionably demonstrative, of the regenerative presence and power of God the Holy Ghost.

Would we learn the same lesson, it may help us, to think first, how very limited our knowledge must be if we rest merely in our sense-perceptions.

When our Lord reminded Nicodemus that he had never seen, nor could see, the wind—that he knew of its presence, or even of its existence, only from its effects—He reminded him of what is true in every department of human knowledge. Let us take the illustration, and see how universally applicable it is.

We have never seen the wind; and if one were asked to describe it, to tell exactly what it is, much more, how it looks and what shape it has, or substance it is made of, we should be utterly at a loss. We might say, it is an invisible force of nature. But, here again, we should be only expressing an exposition of our deeper and denser ignorance. "An invisible force of nature:"—what is *a force*? Have we ever seen force? Can we tell what is its substance, if it have subsance; or, give its shape if it have shape? We may attempt to define it, and say, it is effective power. But again we stumble on an abstract term *power*. What is power? How do we know that there is any such thing in the universe? Have we ever seen power? Can we describe it? If we were asked to make a representation of it, or even to tell exactly what it is, could we do, or say, anything but confess our utter ignorance? And, this *Nature*, about which there is so much scientific talk in our time: what is it? They who claim to be preeminently the representatives of modern science, make especial claims to a knowledge of nature; and some claim it to be a sufficiently clear account of the way in which the world was made to say that it was simply an evolution of nature. The

same persons insist upon it that we have no right to claim that we know anything except that which is perceptible by our senses. It is surprising that they do not ask themselves, what they really mean by *Nature*, and how they know of its existence! Have they ever seen it? Can they tell, from any sensible evidence, what it is? whether a person, or substance, or pure force? and, if either of these or something else, what, and whence, its vital energy? If the phrase "Natural Evolution" expresses all that we can know of the world's creation, it is certainly important to know what Natural Evolution, in fact, is. The word evolution has a learned sound, but it means simply, unfolding, or turning inside out. Natural Evolution, then, is simply Nature unfolding itself, or, turning itself outward from some germ and by some vital force within. Who has ever seen that germ or that vital force? Who can tell when, or why, or how, the evolution started? Who can show us the visible or tangible energy which has within itself the potential existence of all things living? or, tell what that energy really is, and what the real secret of its vital power?

Ah! there was indeed an illustration of universal application in the Saviour's reminder to Nicodemus of his ignorance concerning the wind: "Thou

hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth."

Must we rest, then, in a conclusion of absolute agnosticism? Must we admit that we do, or can, in truth, know absolutely nothing? and, that whatever seems to be true to us, is simply that which appears probable from our particular point of view? Nay, nay,—very far indeed from it. The Saviour's illustration was not a reminder merely or chiefly of human ignorance. If it was intended to convince Nicodemus that "the things which do appear" in human sight are not the true realities of the universe, it was, at the same time, still more decidedly intended to lead him to the true knowledge of these realities. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof:" no question here that we know the wind when we hear it; but the point is that what we hear is *not the wind itself, but only its sound.* This means—to generalise the illustration—that the real motive-forces of all nature and life are beyond our perception, but *all movements and forms in life and nature, which we do perceive, are demonstrative proofs of their existence.* Granted, that no human eye has ever seen the wind; yet, from the beginning of human existence its sound has been heard over all the earth; the morning and

evening breeze has gently whispered, and the mighty hurricane has roared in its destructive march; in the rustling trees of every wood, over the waving grain of every field, upon the rippling surface of all waters, its movements have been perceived. These are its effects. They are unquestionable and positively certain: and just as unquestionable and certain is the conclusion, that it which we rightly call the wind is the cause of these effects; and then surely, still further, that its existence is as veritable as its movements, its being even more real than its effects. So of all other forms and movements in nature and life: these are what we see; we can see nothing beyond these. But their very existence affords certain proof to us that there is something beyond. They are manifest effects; but to every effect there must be a cause; and it is the extremest absurdity of unreason to suppose that anything can be more real than that which caused it.

Have we not here a sufficient reply to all agnostic or infidel theories of the natural creation? It is, they say, simply an evolution of nature. But if so, there can be nothing in the world which was not originally in nature. There is an abundance of life in the world: then it follows that nature must be alive! There are, in countless ways and forms,

manifestations of unlimited power : then nature must be all-powerful—that is, almighty ! There is, moreover, abundant evidence of supreme intelligence, such a skilful adjustment of parts to their whole, and such foreseeing arrangement of means for their true ends, as can come only from perfect wisdom : then nature must be perfectly and infinitely wise ! So, the conclusion must be that nature is a living, almighty, and perfectly wise being ! What can this be, according to any possible human conception, but *a Person*—perfect in consciousness and infinite in intelligence and will ? In other words, the infidel, who refuses to acknowledge God, makes a god of that which he calls Nature, being obliged still, by the inexorable laws of reason, to admit, what inspiration declares, that "the invisible things of Him are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made." *

Now we are prepared for the direct application of the Saviour's illustration. No man hath seen or can see the Spirit of God : but all human life in the world is a manifestation of character, and there is, unquestionably, such a thing in character as goodness. When we speak of a good man in distinction from a bad man, everybody understands at once

* Revised Version.

exactly what is meant. We all know what goodness is. There is no doubt of its effective existence, no question of its dominating power in human character, its capability to make one man in all his actions and motives, in his whole life and being, an entirely different man from one of another sort. This goodness is what we rightly call a personal quality. It is not itself a person, but it is an attribute of a personal character. It is a manifest effect in human life ; and, wherever seen in any person it *characterises* that person : that is, it proves to us beyond a possibility of doubt, that, behind it and as its only possible source, there is a personal life which we do not see, but which is consciously and intelligently exercising good motives and intentions. There can be no conception of goodness without an implicit recognition of a good person, by whom it is exercised. Granted that we do not see the person ; granted that we cannot see the personal entity in which goodness originates ; yet, the effect which we do see and know is to us a demonstrative proof of his existence, and of his then conscious and intentional activity.

This is the inevitable conclusion in every case. Well then, let the principle have its universal application. In all the past generations of human

life there have been, and all over the world there are now, good men and women. Wherever and however manifested, this goodness is an effect; and if an effect, then, behind it, there must be a cause, and this cause must be, as we have already concluded, a personal being. In each individual life it is directly the individual person. But, unless we are prepared to say that every individual life is self-originated and self-inspired, the sure conclusion even of reason itself must be, that all our human goodness has its original source in a personal Being who is very goodness itself—that is, a Being, whom our heathen ancestors called the Great Spirit, and whom we know, under the teachings of Revelation, as the Spirit of God, or, as God the Holy Ghost.

Yes, we may be sure of this, as sure as we can be of our own existence, that the Good Spirit—God the Holy Ghost—is, and from the beginning has been, ever imparting His heavenly impulses to inspire for good the hearts of the children of men on earth; and in so far as they individually, in the exercise of human responsibility, and in accordance with the laws of human character, have accepted and acted upon these inspirations, in just that measure have good thoughts and deeds glorified and beatified the life of humanity on earth. Should one

ask, if, on the other hand, the unquestionable existence and prevalence of wickedness does not equally prove that there is a bad spirit also at work, we answer at once, Yes; and therefore we have no difficulty in believing what the Scriptural revelation tells us concerning the personality of such a being: and we are the more thankful for the revelation, since it assures us at the same time, that his power is limited in both his present dominion and its duration, and that, in the final end, goodness will have a complete triumph over all badness, and there will be no more sin, as there will be no more death.

Another question may be asked:—Is it not true that *all* human goodness comes from the Spirit of God? Goodness, then, in heathenism; goodness in the Christianised world, outside of the Church: Where, then, the need of baptism or the sacramental communion? and what the practical import of the Saviour's declaration, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God"? We answer: There are now living, and in every generation there have been living, on earth men and women of whom it is but the simple truth to say, not only, as it may be true of all, that they are capable, from the Holy Spirit's

influences, of occasional good thoughts and deeds; but, very much more, that their entire life and being are consciously and determinedly, yet with perfect spontaneity, in constant submission to the inspiring influences of the Holy Spirit; so that in describing them you can find no words so true as to say, they have been *born* of the Spirit, their very life being truly the inspiration of His life. Find such a person anywhere (and you may find them in many a Christian home), and ask him, or her, where the breath of the spiritual life finds its atmosphere in most quickening and invigorating purity? The answer will invariably be: Within the kingdom of Christ and in the regular and faithful reception of its sacramental ministrations; their testimony invariably setting the seal of personal experience to the declaration of the Saviour, made in the beginning of Christian history, that, to enter in very truth into the kingdom of God, the Christian rule is that one must be born of water and of the Spirit.

May we not, then, with reason bless God, for the setting up and perpetuation of His kingdom on earth? And since it is our inestimable privilege to have our earthly life where we may breathe its atmosphere, and partake of its fullest and best inspirations, should we not see to it that we forfeit

not this our high privilege, by our own personal refusal or neglect? The Holy Spirit, even the Spirit of Christ the Incarnate God, is that Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. As such, in His gracious goodness He has unquestionably enlightened, and will continue to enlighten, every one of us. But in the exercise of our own personal will, we may refuse to walk in His light; we may shut our eyes to it and persist in walking on still in darkness, and then, it is revealed as a fearful possibility that we may even "grieve the Holy Spirit of God."

Far better, surely, that we should use the high and heavenly capabilities of our manhood in gladly and gratefully submitting to His gracious inspirations. Far better that our life, even now and here, be, as it may, so "filled with the Spirit," so thoroughly quickened and enlightened by His heavenly inspirations, that it may be said in very truth of us, that we have been made a "new creature," "born again" of Him; translated out of darkness into the kingdom of God's incarnate Son. Let this be true of us, as it may: and then our earthly life becomes a heavenly citizenship, and, no matter what our place in it or our apparent success or unsuccess in its allotments, we are, even in it, assuredly quickened with the

power of an endless life, and made to be no longer mere children of humanity, but very sons and heirs of the Almighty and ever-living Father, by whom all things were made and in whom all things consist.

THE END.

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